

Rolling Stone

Issue 768 November 2015
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**Spring's
Best
TV Shows,
Albums
& Movies**

Plus

**PARKWAY DRIVE
BOY & BEAR
KEITH RICHARDS
JOHN GRANT
VIOLENT SOHO
CITY AND
COLOUR
THE WEEKND
DAN AUERBACH**

Cold Chisel

Jimmy and Don Get Grilled by
Grinspoon's Phil Jamieson

**Taking Trump
Seriously**

ON THE TRAIL WITH
THE GOP TOUGH GUY

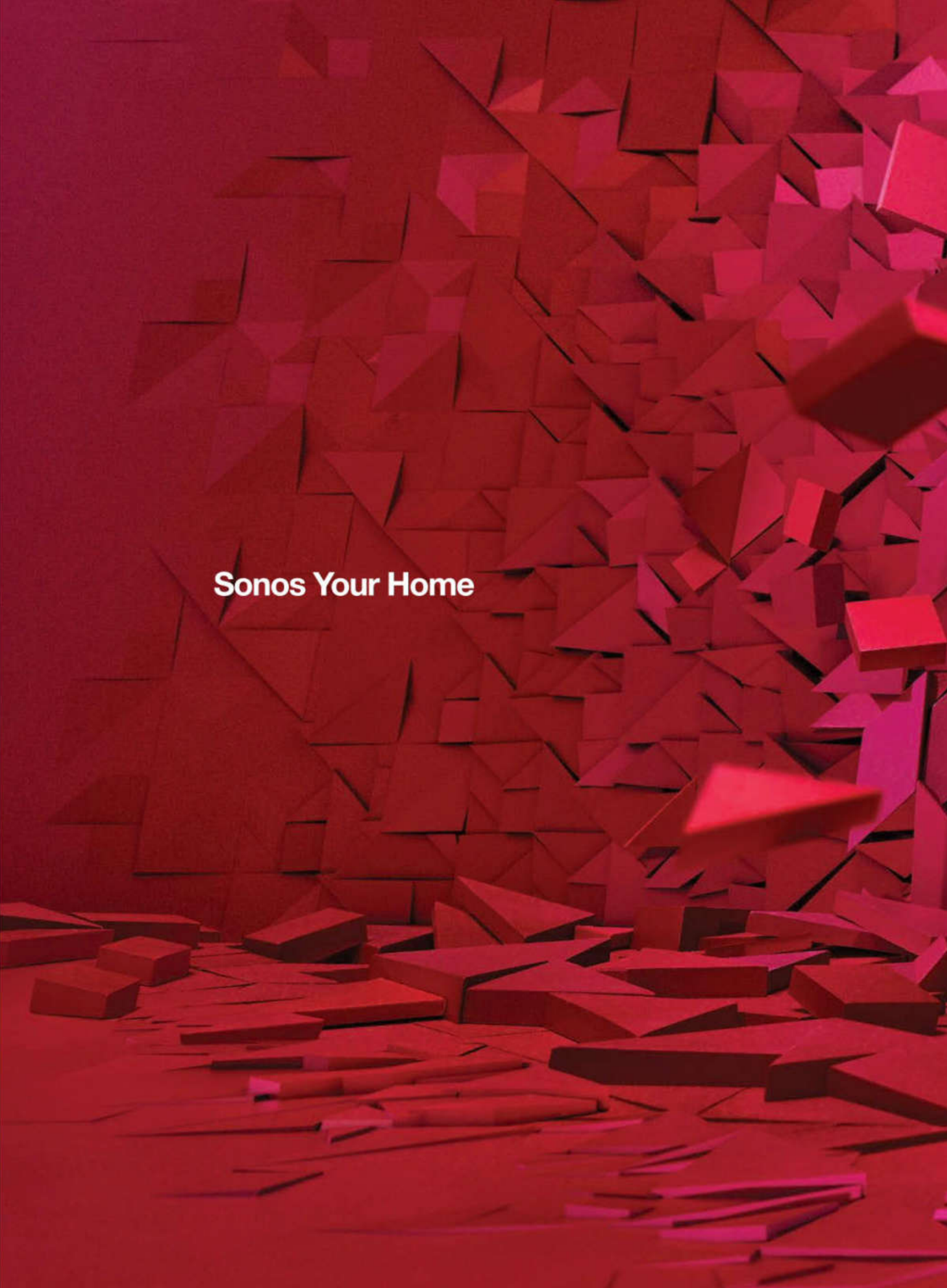
**The Rise and Fall of
a Bitcoin Kingpin**



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The background is a dense, abstract composition of various geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in shades of red, pink, and magenta. The shapes are layered and overlapping, creating a sense of depth and movement. Some shapes appear to be floating or falling, while others are more solid and grounded. The overall effect is a vibrant, textured wall of color and form.

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leads our TV
preview.
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the next President?
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"ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS"

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How a bullied geek forged an empire out of digital currency, and became a suspect in a billion dollar heist. *By* DAVID KUSHNER.....84

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ON THE COVER Cold Chisel photographed by Daniel Boud.

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LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE



For Chris's Sake

CONSIDERING HOW MANY burn-outs never came out the other side of the Seattle grunge explosion, it's encouraging to see that Chris Cornell has remained sane and healthy – if only Cobain, Layne Staley, Andrew Wood etc had possessed some of the same intestinal fortitude.

Glenn Saari,
Goulburn, NSW

READING THE FEATURE ON Chris Cornell, I was struck by something when I saw the photo of him interviewing Jimmy Page. Surely Soundgarden are my generation's Led Zeppelin, right? Cornell is up there with Robert Plant for ball-tearing wailing, and Kim Thayil is a monster on the guitar. Just putting it out there.

Dan West,
Downer, ACT

Where In the World Is Eric Clapton?

ERIC CLAPTON, THE MAN, the legend, inspiration to many, where is he now? After his last album I was itching for his next but then all of a sudden he just disappeared from the legendary radar. What's coming from him (if anything)? He sure did change the world.

Jack Mathews,
QLD

Gilmour's Exit

IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S A GOOD thing that David Gilmour is drawing a line under Pink Floyd. He seemed to find it hard to get excited about that band anymore so I'm excited to see what he comes up with now that he's free of all the history and legal bullshit that came with Pink Floyd. If only Roger Waters would let it go and move on with his life as well.

Del Brandis,
Eastwood, NSW

"Soundgarden are my generation's Led Zeppelin. Cornell is up there with Robert Plant for ball-tearing wailing."

N.W.A O.K.

AFTER SEEING THE *Straight Outta Compton* movie I had to go back and read the story in issue 767 again. It's interesting to see the way Dre talks about the band's history compared to the way it's all portrayed in the movie. I would recommend anyone who loved the movie to seek out this article. It gives good insight into how many liberties are taken with the truth by Hollywood.

Kym Peel,
Newfarm, QLD

Throne Envy

AS A MAD COLLECTOR OF music memorabilia (I have a genuine AC/DC tour bell in my back garden), surely the ultimate prize for any collector will now be Dave Grohl's *Game Of Thrones*-style guitar throne, used while he had a broken leg on the *Sonic Highway* tour. I would pay an arm and a leg for that bad boy, so Dave, if you want to sell it, contact me through ROLLING STONE!

Ben Dewars,
Bowral, NSW

WRITE TO US AND WIN

Thanks to Warner Music, every letter published will win a CD copy of Duran Duran's new album *Paper Gods* and a poster (valued at \$21.99). Write to us and tell us your thoughts on the magazine or life in general. But please, keep it brief!

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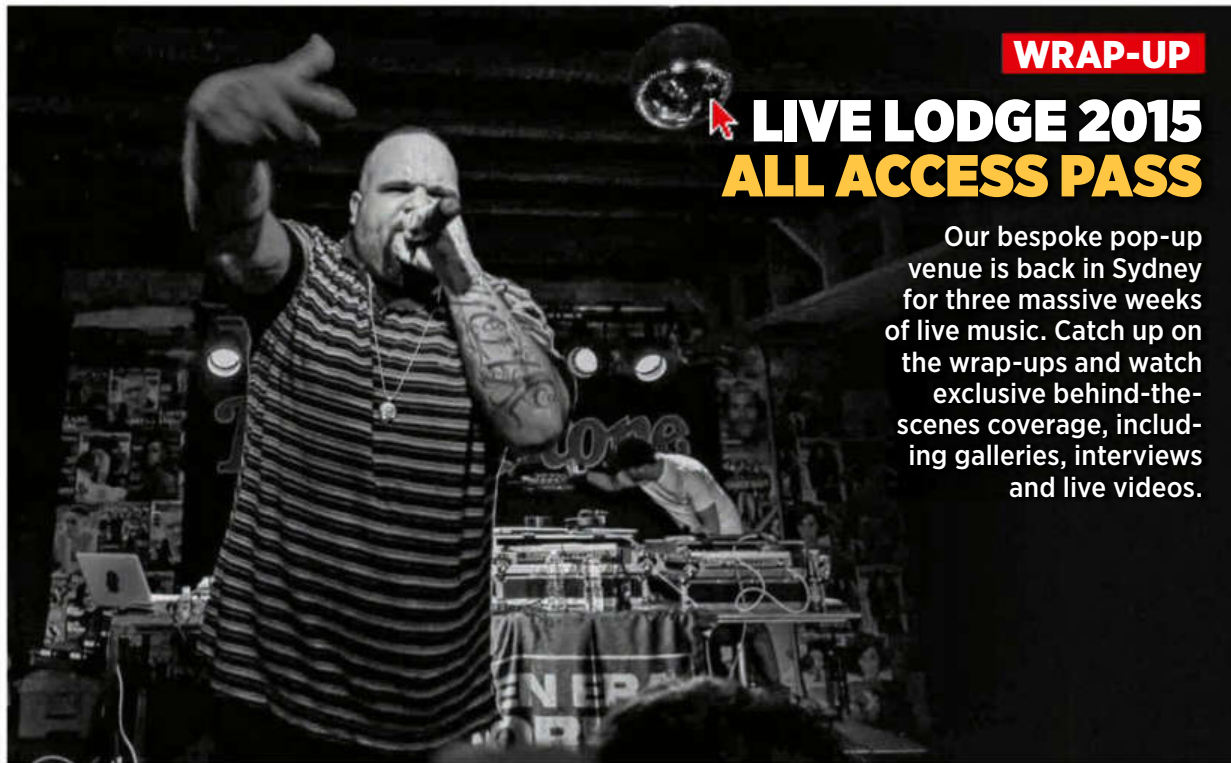
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We're streaming Australia's favourite Paul Kelly-related songsmith's new record in its entirety. Hear it first!



VIDEO

**AT HOME
WITH MAC
DEMARCO**

ROLLING STONE spent a fun day with the rising indie-rock star at his house in Rockaway, Queens. DeMarco is playing Falls Festival this New Year.



POLITICS

**THERE'S
SOMETHING
ABOUT
MALCOLM**

Now that he's had time to settle into the job we assess the new PM's successes and shortcomings. How does he stack-up?



Carly Rae Jepsen

**MUSIC NEWS,
AROUND THE CLOCK**

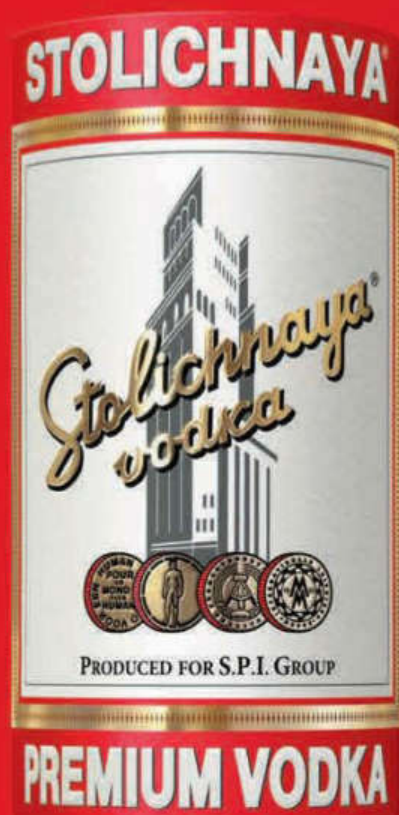
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"If money is speech, you don't want a guy who's got \$10 billion of talk." —Stephen Colbert on Donald Trump

Random Notes



Heavy Dose of Rock

AC/DC brought a new line-up and new songs to New Jersey's MetLife Stadium for their *Rock or Bust* tour, which will hit Australia in November and December.



PALE EMPERORS

Tourmates Billy Corgan and Marilyn Manson made a scene at a SiriusXM event in Chicago. Why the nun outfit? "Easiest answer would be to say, 'Nun comment'," says Manson.



WHAT'S IN A SHIRT?

At Bigsound, Peter Garrett donned a "With Goodes" T-shirt. All proceeds from sales of the shirts go to the Go Foundation.



HELLBENT FOR LEATHER St. Vincent gave a shout-out to the "freaks, queers and dominatrixes" at San Francisco's Outside Lands festival – and covered a snippet of Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus".



FLEA'S BEES The Chili Peppers bassist has a new hobby: his "beautiful little bees", 200,000 of which he keeps in his backyard.

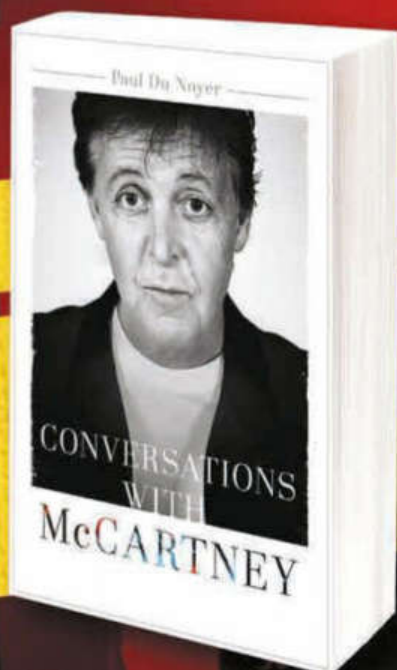


Taylor's New Folk Squad

Taylor Swift called Julia Roberts (right) and Joan Baez onstage at the pop superstar's concert at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. "She was a joy," says the 74-year-old Baez, who shimmied along to "Style", wearing a Swift T-shirt. "Sweet, kind, respectful. She knows how much she influences young people, and she doesn't take that role lightly."

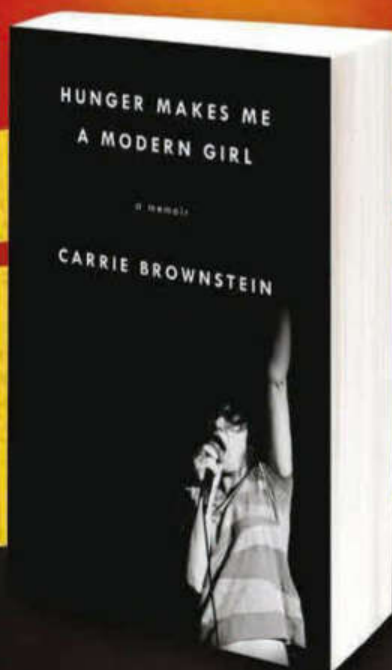
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GETTY IMAGES, 2; TAYLOR SWIFT/INSTAGRAM; FLEA/INSTAGRAM; GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY

THE MUSIC MAKERS



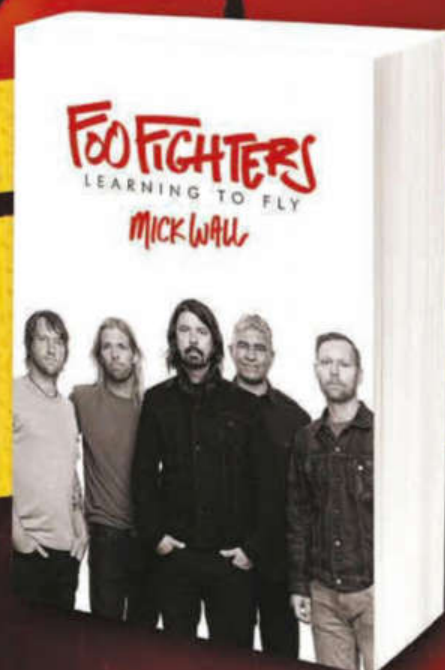
The intimate portrayal of one of the most famous men in music, Sir Paul McCartney.

OUT 29 SEPTEMBER



A funny and deeply personal look at making a life – and finding yourself – in music, from the guitarist of the pioneering band Sleater-Kinney.

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Rock & Roll

ON HIS OWN

"Some of this you can't always express with the Stones," says Richards.

Keith's New Riff

Inside his first solo album in 23 years By Patrick Doyle

LOUDER!" SAYS KEITH RICHARDS, raising his index finger as he peers into a sound booth at New York's Electric Lady Studios. Soon, "Crosseyed Heart", a raw Delta-blues stomp, blares from the speakers. The room is filled with the sound of Richards' fingerpicked acoustic

guitar and familiar growl as he sings about juggling two lovers at once (opening line: "I love my sugar, but I love my honey too").

Richards, looking stadium-ready in a snakeskin jacket, is holding a listening session for *Crosseyed Heart*, his first solo album since [Cont. on 18]

KEITH RICHARDS

[Cont. from 17] 1992's *Main Offender*, which was recorded with his band the X-Pensive Winos. *Crosseyed Heart* is a more intimate album: Richards played the majority of the instruments himself, and showed off his musical personalities – including hard-luck rock & roll (“Trouble”, “Something for Nothing”), horn-steeped Memphis soul (“Lover’s Plea”) and gorgeous after-hours ballads (“Just a Gift”). “Some of that you can’t always express with the Stones, you know what I mean?” says Richards. “It’s another outlet. I mean, I hadn’t realised it’s been 20-odd years since I’ve done this. Time flies!”

One highlight is “Illusion”, a soulful heartbreak duet with Norah Jones. “She gave me exactly the right feeling we needed,” Richards says. “I’m always looking for songs where I can bring a lady in.”

Richards started the album around 2011, while the Rolling Stones were on a long break following their *Bigger Bang* tour. Bored, he began scheduling New York studio time with an old friend and collaborator, drummer Steve Jordan. (“We had a blast,” Jordan says.) They met sporadically over the next three years, with Richards layering guitars, piano and bass before recruiting “top cats” like former Winos guitarist Waddy Wachtel and pianist Ivan Neville, along with Stones touring alum Bernard Fowler and Blondie Chaplin, to polish the tracks. “It was such a gas to be playing together again,” says Wachtel. “It was a party.”

The album is accompanied by a documentary, *Under the Influence*, directed by Morgan Neville, which premiered last month on Netflix, in which Richards discusses influences, makes pilgrimages to spots like Nashville’s Ryman Auditorium and visits Buddy Guy at his club in Chicago. “I started with a premise: If you want to understand Keith, look at the music,” says Neville. “In a life full of tumult, it’s the one thing that’s always been true.”

The Stones wrapped the U.S. leg of their Zip Code Tour in July, and Richards says they will tour South America next in February. But he may play live sooner – he’s currently weighing whether to hit the road himself with some of the Winos. “Suddenly, I have this extra spread of time,” he says. “I’m thinking about it. If I can pull the guys together, I would love to do a couple of shows.”

For more LPs you need to hear this spring and summer, go to page 80.



BREAKING

ON THE RISE
Jamie Lawson supported Ed Sheeran in Australia earlier this year.

Jamie Lawson’s Slow Road to Success

British singer-songwriter is the first artist to release an album on Ed Sheeran’s label

WHEN HE SCREWS UP THE opening verse to “Wasn’t Expecting That”, Jamie Lawson chuckles quietly, apologises to the audience at his Nova 96.9 Red Room Global Tour gig and begins the song anew. “Usually no-one knows my songs so I can get away with that,” he confesses.

Those gathered inside Dublin’s Whelan’s pub are in on the joke. A hit single in Ireland in 2011, the bitter-sweet “Wasn’t Expecting That” has been newly classified double platinum in Australia, turning the 39-year-old singer-songwriter, largely unknown in his native England, into an unlikely pop star. But if Lawson sounds humbled by this most slow-burning of ‘overnight’ successes, for his most high-profile champion, cheering on from side-stage, it’s an overdue vindication of the singer’s talent.

“Jamie’s ready for this,” says Ed Sheeran, saluting the first signing to his Gingerbread label. “He knows how to write songs, he knows how to play gigs and ‘Wasn’t Expecting That’ is an obvious hit. I knew radio stations would play it at least

once purely because it’s on my label but I knew they’d play it again because listeners would demand it.”

The two men met on London’s singer/songwriter circuit, sharing a stage for the first time in 2010. Having watched the younger musician ascend to superstardom, Lawson was pleasantly surprised to be invited to support Sheeran at an intimate Dublin gig last summer, and disarmed when Sheeran pronounced himself a fan. Tour supports preceded the announcement of Lawson’s Gingerbread deal in March, and the Plymouth-born artist – no novice, having released his first album, *Last Night Stars*, in 2006 – is keenly aware of the opportunity he’s been handed.

“Ed knows a lot of good musicians, and he could have signed any of them,” he admits. “So there’s some pressure. I don’t want to let him down.”

There seems little chance of that: Sheeran sounds like a proud father when he talks of two more “superb” singles on his protégé’s self-titled album (out this month). But when asked if he could handle the fame enjoyed by his ‘boss’, the affable Lawson looks politely horrified.

“I don’t think I could,” he laughs. “But Ed has such a genuine heart, and if he believes in me, hopefully other people will share his faith.”

PAUL BRANNIGAN

“Jamie’s ready for this,” says mentor Ed Sheeran.

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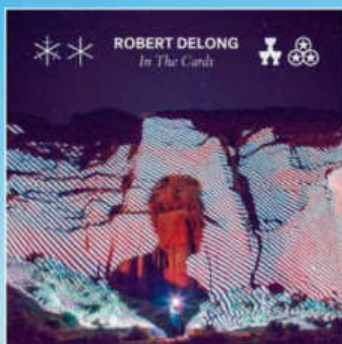
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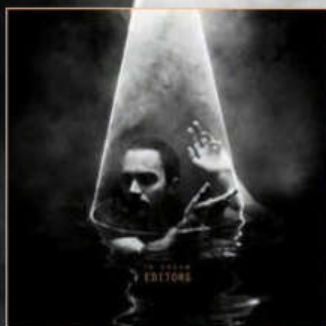
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Violent Soho Prep New LP

Brisbane rockers record the follow-up to breakthrough album 'Hungry Ghost'

WHEN VIOLENT SOHO released *Hungry Ghost* in 2013, their gameplan was simple. "We got some time off work and presumed we'd do the one album tour," says guitarist James Tidswell. "Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, back to work." Such was the success of their third LP – it was certified Gold in September last year – that the initial run of shows grew to nearly two years' worth of dates, before the band finally brought the touring cycle to a close last December with a triumphant gig in Mansfield.

After a few months off, during which frontman Luke Boerdam holidayed in Europe, the Brisbane quartet regrouped in May to listen to the songs the singer (and main songwriter) had begun piecing together during the *Hungry Ghost* tours. If there was any sense of pressure to follow that album's success, it was nullified quickly. "We just realised we can only be who we are," says Tidswell from his Brisbane home, having finished his guitars for the first half of the album yesterday. "We've been a band coming up to 12 years and we only saw the level of success we're now having in the last year-and-a-half, two years. We don't know how that happened, and the idea isn't to make a science out of it." Adds Boerdam with a laugh: "It's not like the band can come together and have this conversation about what do you want to do,



Luke Boerdam with Bryce Moorhead at the Shed Studios, Brisbane.

where do you want to take our sound, because I just don't think we're good enough musicians! I just write what I write, and if it ends up being sonically the same as *Hungry Ghost*, that's where my songwriting was at at that point in time."

Having recorded *Hungry Ghost* at Brisbane's the Shed Studios ("The outside looks like a scene from *Wolf Creek*," says Tidswell) with mate Bryce Moorhead (a tree-lopper by trade) in the producer's chair, the quartet opted for the same combination for their as-yet-untitled new record, which they started recording in early August. Working 12-hour days, six days a week, of the 20 or so songs Boerdam has

penned he's hoping 14 will be recorded, but stops short of revealing any song titles. "I'll keep that to me and my weird diary journal," he smiles.

While Tidswell cringes when saying "the heavier stuff is heavier and the softer stuff is softer" – "I've read so many interviews where bands would always say that, but no shit, it's true!" – Boerdam has found inspiration in some new places. "It was cool to get out of Australia for a bit," he says. "I went through a war museum in Paris, and a song idea just popped into my head. It's funny how that can happen. A little melody pops into your head and I hummed it into my iPhone recorder."

ROD YATES

COMEBACK

THE MEANIES DECLARE IT'S NOT THEM, IT'S YOU



Twenty-one years after their last record, the punkers release new LP

It's been 21 years since Link Meanie has had to talk about a new Meanies record. Sure, the band have been playing sporadically enough to earn them a 26-year-in-the-game badge, and Link has been playing in bands like the Bakelite Age, Sun God Replica and the To-

morrow People, but the Meanies haven't put any new music to tape since 1994's *10% Weird*. Seemingly from nowhere, the Melbourne four-piece have produced the searing *It's Not Me, It's You*, through Poison City Records.

"I just got a copy of the new album from Wally [bassist and manager]," says Meanie, "and I've got to say, it's really fuckin' good! With all modesty, I'm very impressed."

Link, Wally and drummer Ringo have been joined by "Jaws" Stanley (the Casanovas) after the death of their last guitarist, Tas, in 2008. "I don't think we've done one before that sounds as good as this," says Link. "I played guitar on this album so it has a bit more of that dirty garage sound, but then Jaws is playing with that really distorted Meanies guitar sound, so it all made for a really good wall of noise." **MATT COYTE**

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A Rising Star of Rom-Com Raunch

Writer-director Leslye Headland rethinks the romantic comedy

RIGHT NOW, FEW, IF ANY, DIRECTORS are doing foulmouthed humour with as much heart or balls as Leslye Headland. Here's a primer on the 34-year-old.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR Headland's new film, *Sleeping With Other People* (Nov 5th), is a mix of screwball comedy and straight-up raunch that follows two friends (Jason Sudeikis and Alison Brie) who bond over their inability to make relationships work. "It's *When Harry Met Sally* for assholes," Headland says.

CHOICE WORDS Headland's been an outspoken critic of the way Hollywood treats female directors. When she first pitched her 2012 film, *Bachelorette*, she says, "I was told, 'You should probably ask your parents for \$250,000 and shoot the thing yourself.' And look what happened to Ava DuVernay. She's the Beyoncé of filmmaking, and she can't get nominated for *Selma*! [Hollywood] isn't interested in women unless we're in a group and a *Vanity Fair* spread. Probably just wearing lingerie."

THE RIGHT TOUCH A key scene in *Sleeping With Other People* involves Sudeikis teaching Brie how to masturbate by fingering a plastic bottle. "I was surprised men have no idea what's going on with the vagina," Headland says. "I figured that if I could get a guy to demonstrate how to finger a bottle and have it be sexy and not straight-up gross, then I know I've made it."

DAVID FEAR

THE AGE OF THE BIOPIC

If you're a movie star right now, there's a decent chance you're playing a real person in your next film. Here's a look at five upcoming biopics – and how the portrayal compares to the real deal **By David Fear**

Black Mass OCTOBER 8th

Johnny Depp's portrayal of Boston crime boss Whitey Bulger was so uncanny it unnerved crew members who grew up in the city. The actor plays him as a Southie psychopath who helps an old lady, then calmly shoots an associate. "We studied surveillance footage to capture his physicality," director Scott Cooper says. "Bulger was so fascinating because he was so multifaceted and complex. Cunning. Humorous. Deadly."



Bulger



Depp



Fassbender

Steve Jobs JANUARY 14th



Jobs

Working from Walter Isaacson's biography of Jobs, screenwriter Aaron Sorkin tackled the Apple CEO's career through three product launches (the movie consists of three real-time scenes). Michael Fassbender doesn't try to do a Jobs impersonation, but makes the unrelentingly intense Jobs seem self-aware and sympathetic. There have been a few Jobs biopics, but none dive as deeply into his mercurial genius.

Trumbo DECEMBER 26th

A successful screenwriter in the 1940s, Dalton Trumbo became a First Amendment hero after getting blacklisted during the Red Scare and speaking out against the House Un-American Activities Committee. Bryan Cranston nails his radical politics and roguish charisma. "[Before *Trumbo*] Hollywood had never made a movie based on a true story of the blacklist," says screenwriter John McNamara.



Trumbo



Cranston



Hiddleston

I Saw the Light TBC 2016



Williams

In this Hank Williams biopic, British actor Tom Hiddleston doesn't just play the man called "the Hillbilly Shakespeare" – he also sings all of Williams' songs in the film. To prepare, Hiddleston studied Williams' guitar technique with the help of veteran country singer-songwriter Rodney Crowell. "Hank's life has a tragic arc," Hiddleston has said of Williams, who died at age 29, "but in simple truth, he was a genius."

Snowden TBC 2016

In this Oliver Stone film, Joseph Gordon-Levitt plays Edward Snowden, who blew the lid off the NSA's domestic-spying program and became one of the world's most wanted men. Gordon-Levitt has said he's not a good impersonator, so expect a more impressionistic portrayal. The actor did have firsthand material to draw on – he met Snowden (now a fugitive in Russia) to prepare for the part.



Snowden



Gordon-Levitt

FRONT TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: COURTESY OF LESLYE HEADLAND/IFC FILMS; GETTY IMAGES, 2; HILARY BRONWYN GAYLE/BLECKER STREET FILMS; GETTY IMAGES, 4; UNIVERSAL FILMS; GETTY IMAGES, 2



CLOSE-UP

Josh Ritter's New Orleans Adventure

Singer-songwriter delivers latest 'Sermon' with a smile
By Rod Yates

JOSH RITTER HAS JUST BEEN doing a final check of the test pressing of his new album, *Sermon on the Rocks*, when he arrives back at his house in Brooklyn. The excitement of seeing his latest work in physical form is, he says, "an amazing feeling", and as palpable as the time he got his debut record in his hands back in 1999. "I ordered 2,000 made and they all showed up on my porch, and I had to put them in the basement of my college house," laughs the 38-year-old. "The floor was dirt and someone had thrown a bunch of old underwear down there. I carted [those records] with me everywhere for about four years." In contrast to its predecessor, 2013's post-divorce *The Beast In Its Tracks*, *Sermon on the Rocks* finds the singer-songwriter in ebullient

"I hope people listen to the record and don't know it's me."

form. Now happily married with a two-year-old daughter, Beatrix, Ritter's gameplan was simple: "I realised early on I wanted to have a party and I wanted to be some place fun and I wanted to work with somebody who was wild and I wanted the songs to be crazy." That person was Trina Shoemaker (Sheryl Crow) and the place was New Orleans. "I didn't want it to be a New Orleans record," he adds, "but I did want to have the awesome time you could only have there."

The resulting LP flirts with Ritter's balladeering side, but truly comes to life when it pairs his trademark lyrical verbosity with a more vibrant, eclectic sound. "I definitely hope some people listen to it and don't know it's me," he chuckles. "I just feel very free to do what I want now, I feel like I've got the reins in my hand. I haven't been singing through a smile for the last couple of records, and I definitely am on this one. I hope some of that shows up." **RS**

Dan Auerbach

The Black Keys frontman on record geeks, his new band the Arcs, and why he hates cats

By Simon Vozick-Levinson

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, WHENEVER HE HASN'T been busy selling out arenas with Black Keys drummer Patrick Carney, Dan Auerbach has booked informal jam sessions with a loose group of friends including Menahan Street Band saxophonist Leon Michels. "These guys are my oldest musical buddies besides Pat," says the singer-guitarist. "We just record shit for fun and sock it away." This year, Auerbach and Michels combed through those tracks to assemble *Yours, Dreamily*, the debut of the band they dubbed the Arcs. Auerbach, 36, says he's looking forward to their first tour: "With these guys, we can try absolutely anything."

The Arcs album sounds like some lost psychedelic LP that you might find buried in a used-records bin. Are you a big crate-digger?

That's really what we are: record nerds. The last real job I had was at a record store, Quonset Hut in Akron, Ohio. I had graduated high school and completely immersed myself in blues music, but I was exposed to things there that I never would have heard otherwise. I remember this Frank Black and the Catholics album that I loved. We also sold a lot of Deadhead merchandise. Did this album let you tap into your own Deadhead side?

Yeah, definitely. The Arcs scratch that itch for me – and when we play live, it's going to be magnified. These guys are so crazy-capable. We all got together and played recently, and it was so fucking exciting. There was a lot of improvisation.

The Black Keys are one of the last big rock & roll bands left. How do you like being the keepers of that flame?

When we tell people that we can't believe we're headlining Coachella or whatever, we mean it. We are not the people that you would normally associate with being at the top of a pop food chain – generally, to do that, you've got to have some star charisma.

You had to cancel some Keys dates recently when Pat hurt his shoulder. Is he better now?

He's doing great. We played some shows, and he hasn't had any pain the next morning or anything. He can't raise his arm above a certain level, but he doesn't actually need to, the way he plays. Speaking of injuries, you probably saw the throne Dave Grohl had

built so he could play with a broken leg. On a frontman-to-frontman level, are you jealous of Dave's throne?

No! He deserves it. I don't need to see a rock star running all over the goddamn stage. My idea of cool is Hound Dog Taylor, and he always played sitting down.

How do you keep life on the road fun when you've toured as much as you have?

You don't. It's like *Groundhog Day*. Every arena backstage looks exactly the same.

I heard that you're into boxing. Do you spar backstage on tour?

I brought a punching bag, boxing gloves and my jump-rope, and I try to work out. But not before shows. It's not like I get pumped up like I'm a WWF wrestler – like, oil my body and do a bunch of pushups before I run onstage.

Bob Dylan likes boxing too. Who would win if you and he got in the ring?

I would win [laughs]. But if we got in the songwriting ring, he would win.

What are you listening to these days?

I'm into Vince Staples. And I love Future's new album. It's tough as nails. On one Arcs song, you sing, "Man's best friend will bite you in the end." I take it you're not a dog person?

No, fuck, I love dogs! It's man that I don't like. I hate cats, though – mostly because all the awful girlfriends I ever had were into cats.



KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

City and Colour

If I Should Go Before You



featuring the singles
"Wasted Love" and "Lover Come Back"
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SCREAM FOR ME!
Bruce Dickinson in
action

PROFILE

Boy & Bear Push the 'Limit'

Band navigate fatigue and health issues to record third LP live to tape By Rod Yates

DAVE HOSKING IS THE FIRST TO emerge from Boy & Bear's rehearsal room, all bed hair and big smiles as he strides down the rehearsal complex's poster-clad hallway. Guitarist Killian Gavin isn't far behind, dressed casually in jeans and a grey pull-over. The studio in Sydney's inner-west at which the band rehearse is, today, doing a booming business, as Lee Kernaghan (unrecognisable without his trademark hat) strolls past and strains of Led Zeppelin's biggest hits waft through the air as a tribute band go through their paces in one of its myriad rooms. In an hour's time, Gang of Youths' hulking black tour bus will pull

up out front, depositing more gear and bodies into what is clearly a very familiar place for many of the country's musicians.

It wasn't that long ago that Boy & Bear called a tour bus home as they traversed America's highways on one of three U.S. tours they conducted in 2014. In October the Sydney quintet found themselves in a fully kitted-out house on wheels with bunks, a kitchen and living quarters. In some ways it represented the progress the group had made in America – at the beginning of the year they'd embarked on what would be the busiest touring period of their career (170 gigs in 12 months) with a punishing jaunt around the States in only a 12-seater van into which they crammed themselves, their gear and their crew. Each night after a

show they'd hit the road, driving until the early hours of the morning, when they'd pull into a hotel and grab a few hours' sleep before heading off to the next town. Repeat for three weeks.

"It's almost like we did the whole touring year back to front," recalls Gavin, taking a seat on the lip of the stage in the group's rehearsal room as the other members of the band – drummer Tim Hart, keyboardist Jon Hart and bassist David Symes – head out to grab some lunch. "We did the hardest tour at the very start,

which doesn't set you up very well to take on the rest of the year."

On the upside, of the "25 or 30" shows on that initial run, almost all were sold out. Their first ever visit to Canada saw them playing to 1,200 people in Vancouver

"The band played live and it was recorded and we're putting it out."

and Toronto. "It was so bizarre, just out of nowhere," says Hosking.

When the touring concluded in Paris last December, the singer says they "were wiped out. We were living, breathing zombies." He estimates it took until February for some normalcy to creep back into their lives, and it wasn't until March that the band reconvened for a writing trip to Berry on the New South Wales south coast, the first of four such trips they took to pen their new album, *Limit of Love*, the follow-up to 2013's *Harlequin Dream*. "It was baby steps," says Gavin, "cos there was a lot of hesitation after last year and how big it was. Getting back in the same room as everybody, as much as you love everyone, took a lot of willpower and emotional effort."

On one of those writing trips, Hosking – traditionally the band's sole songwriter – was late to arrive, so the band started jamming without him. By the time he turned up they'd come up with the bones of what would become the album's first single, "Walk the Wire". With its Eighties synths and uptempo ruminations on boy meets girl relationships, it marks something of a departure for the quintet, and is one of three songs on the album written collaboratively, a first for the group. The result, says Hosking, is an album that "feels less introspective, broader, like there's more personality".

"We'd tried [collaborating] in the past and it hadn't been as successful," he says, "and it felt like we're [now] operating at a different level of communication."

The day before they flew home from London in December, they met producer Ethan Johns (son of the legendary Glyn), whose credits include albums by Ryan Adams, Paul McCartney and Crowded House. After establishing the main reason for meeting – "He said, 'Look, to be honest I just came here to make sure you guys weren't dickheads'," cackles Gavin. "And we said, 'We did too!'" – they made plans to reconvene at Real World Studios in the south of England in May to record album number three live to tape. When they arrived, Johns had a surprise in store: "When we were setting up," says Hosking, "he said, 'I think it'd be great if we keep this 24-track.'" [Each song could have 24 tracks of instrumentation; by way of comparison, Gavin says in the past the band have had songs containing more than 120 tracks.]

"I'm thinking, 'Are we limiting ourselves too much here?'" recalls the guitarist. "But it was only through doing this experience that you realise, by limiting yourself you get better results. You make better creative decisions because the world isn't your

oyster. There was no editing, no computers. The band played live and it was recorded and we're putting it out."

Johns' favoured vibe over perfection. "I remember we got to the first chorus of 'Breakdown Slow', and I completely forgot what I was playing," says Gavin. "So in that first chorus the guitar just stops. Sure enough, Ethan chose that take and I'm thinking, 'I didn't play guitar for that whole chorus!' He said, 'I know, but everything else is just great.' You just live with those moments."

Six days later, Hosking is at the house

it's just around moving into the next phase with perspective, and with other parts of my life being looked after. I probably wouldn't have cared five years ago, but I don't want to end up in 10 years' time with the band completely successful and the rest of my life in tatters. It's not something that keeps me up at night, but as you get a bit older, the perspective on things shifts a little bit."

Such sentiment is reflected in the vulnerability of some of the lyrics on *Limit of Love*, particularly in songs such as "Breakdown Slow" and "Where'd You Go". It's in



In the Real World

Above: During the making of *Limit of Love* (l-r): Killian Gavin, Jon Hart, Tim Hart, Dave Hosking, David Symes. Left: Producer Ethan Johns working with Gavin. Johns wanted the band to record live, using 24 tracks. "You make better creative decisions because the world isn't your oyster," says Gavin.

the Hart brothers share in Sydney's inner-west, and the band are going through some acoustic arrangements for impending promo gigs. At the rehearsal studio he admitted to feeling more nervous about *Limit of Love* than he had the band's first two full-lengths, saying "I think it's something about getting a bit older and the realities of it set in." Today, he expands on the thought.

"I've never been one to think about the future," he offers. "But I'm 28 and the guys are in their early thirties, and I've [been thinking] about what bands survive past the five or six year mark, what Australian bands prevail and move into the international arena successfully. So I guess the fear isn't necessarily around the release,

part a response to what Hosking calls "a couple of health issues that have become fairly impacting on my life".

"I've had a weird, slightly unsolved neurological issue," he explains, "and that is probably part of the reason we shifted our writing style because I couldn't take on the workload that I could usually. Songs like 'Breakdown Slow' and even 'Where'd You Go', I think there's a little kind of reflection on the loss of control on my end. And at the same time, it's been quite a fascinating process to watch – being forced to change our usual routines has opened up some exciting creative opportunities."

Hosking first became aware of the issues around two years ago when he found he started hitting a phys- [Cont. on 28]

BOY & BEAR

[Cont. from 27] ical wall quite quickly while surfing, and he began having some cognitive issues which have intensified this year. He's unable to exercise and, he says, his "ears ring pretty much all the time", while he's also having issues with his eyes, where they "do a funny thing where it's like looking at a TV screen with a reflection on it". The condition exacerbated the fatigue he felt from touring, and at the end of last year he was "pretty confused and mentally just really out of it and my body was done". It meant that Tim Hart played a larger role in helping Hosking shape his lyrics than in the past, as the singer felt that "cognitively my brain wasn't going to that space and doing things it would do, and there were a lot of scattered ideas everywhere that I just couldn't piece together.

"The good news," he's quick to add, "is that I've got a good team of doctors, and they're confident this is an issue I can solve, and I've jumped the first level of hoops in terms of the major neurological issues. But at this point, my personal focus is just trying to find some answers and sort all that stuff out."

The effect of Hart's involvement is, says Hosking, that the album is "probably lighter" lyrically, and he points to the nervous-boy-building-up-the-courage-to-ask-the-girl-out focus of "Walk the Wire" as a good example. "I haven't been very good at writing from a lighthearted space, and interestingly I don't think Tim's been very good at writing from a lighthearted space, but when we've come together I think we've had the courage to do something different."

At the rehearsal studio Hosking used the analogy of holding onto a steering wheel to convey his journey with Boy & Bear to this point. When you start out, he said, "it's kind of like blind passion, blind endless energy towards this thing", and you're holding onto the steering wheel as tightly as you can. As the band gathered momentum and all the hard work started to pay off, it got harder and harder to take his hands off that wheel. Though he's not sure whether it's a result of wisdom or his health issues, he says he's finally learning to let go.

"I don't want to paint myself as some kind of borderline dictator, I think I'm just naturally driven and work hard, and at times I've worked a little too hard," he explains. "And I've learned that letting go of certain things and letting momentum take over, you can enjoy the process much more, and the bonus is the work is often better. Sometimes when you care about something too much you can strangle it without knowing it." 



SPOTLIGHT

The Righteous Rage of Ash Grunwald

Byron Bay musician fires up the bass and the issues on latest solo album, 'NOW'

THE EVOLUTION OF ASH GRUNWALD over the past decade has been one of the great quiet success stories of Australian music. While his career was initially bred through the blues scene, Grunwald has never let himself be pigeon-holed, embracing influences from hip-hop, rockabilly and the rich history of psychedelia to forge his own sound.

"I remember thinking after I had done one album," says Grunwald, "how incredible it would be to have 10. All the creativity and change that goes into that journey. I'd look at someone like Tom Waits and just think, 'Wow. That's where I want to be.'"

With the release of his latest set, the aptly-titled *NOW*, Grunwald surpasses his ambitions – this is his 11th release in a little over 12 years and marks just how far he has come as an artist, digging deep into the psychedelic blues sound of the late Sixties.

With a band consisting of Ian Perez (Wolfmother) on keys and – particularly – keyboard-bass, and Pete Wilkins

(Blue King Brown) on drums, the album was cut mostly live in the studio with esteemed American producer Nick DiDia (Springsteen, Pearl Jam, Powderfinger).

"For me it was all about the bass, having that done on the keys," says Grunwald. "I wanted to do something really different. It was really performance based, all about the musicianship and getting that tight. Like, in the days of Clapton and Hendrix, the most famous rock stars were really sick players. And that really fell away, which is a shame. It almost became cheesy to rip on your instrument, but we wanted to bring a bit of that back."

With Grunwald's musical evolution there also came a growing maturity, and while his early work shied away from expressing the strong views he's always held, his last few albums have seen him embrace wider social issues.

"I'm less self-conscious now," he says. "Less worried about stepping over certain lines, or even if someone is going to arc up and not like it. Through my interest and fight with coal seam gas, and seeing people who have been affected by that first hand – kids who are sick – you think, 'How can we let this go on?' That spurs you into weaving this sort of stuff into your songs."

DAN LANDER

"I'm less self-conscious now. Less worried about stepping over lines."

FIVE NOTES

Deafheaven

AFTER TRANSFORMING BLACK METAL, THE CALIFORNIANS ARE GOING IN A THRASHER DIRECTION

1 PURISTS DON'T LIKE THEM – BUT THEY'RE OKAY WITH THAT

For every metal fan who fell in love with Deafheaven's 2013 breakout, *Sunbather*, there was a traditionalist who balked at the band's heartfelt amalgam of black metal, post rock and shoegaze. "I love the metal community, but I could do without the strictness and the nit-picking," admits frontman George Clarke. Instead of trying to conform, Clarke and his bandmates have embraced the controversy. "We're outsiders," he says, "and that's totally fine."

2 BLACK METAL IS IN THEIR HEARTS

As teens, Clarke and guitarist Kerry McCoy devoured the sounds of crossover black metal group Cradle of Filth, then moved on to the genre's Scandinavian progenitors. "Initially, the allure was that it was frightening, extreme, visceral – and entertaining," says Clarke. "Later on, I found that there was a lot of beauty in black metal. I really connected with that."

3 THEIR NEW ALBUM NODS TO THRASH METAL'S 'BIG FOUR'

New Bermuda, Deafheaven's third LP, is focused, technical and, above all, heavy. Clarke cites Slayer and Metallica as key reference points. "First and foremost, we wanted to write a record that didn't sound like *Sunbather*," he says. But the frontman dismisses the idea that *New Bermuda* is an attempt to win over the metal faithful. "We've just always liked thrash," he says.

4 WHEN 'SUNBATHER' BLEW UP, CLARKE BROKE DOWN

Clarke struggled to adapt to life in a successful band, and his mental health suffered. His lyrics on *New Bermuda* tell that story. "My life had become very bipolar, and I found it hard to reconcile the highs with the lows," he says. "I became very depressed. At times I felt like I couldn't escape my reality."

5 THE TUNES THEY PLAY IN THE TOUR VAN MAY SURPRISE YOU

"Everyone in the band loves pop and R&B and rap," Clarke reveals, "and when we're in the middle of a touring cycle, we tend to shy away from aggressive music." Current favourites? "I've been listening to the new Weeknd a lot," he says, "and I really like the new Future album."

DAN F. STAPLETON



DEAF METAL
Deafheaven (George Clarke, second from left)

CONFERENCE

Five Big Sounds

Brisbane's annual Bigsound conference is a showcase for emerging talent

FOR THE 14TH YEAR IN A ROW, Bigsound returned to Brisbane's Fortitude Valley last month, bringing with it delegates from all over the world, 150 of Australia's best bands and thousands of punters. The result? Three very big nights spent wandering the Valley checking out as many acts as possible and, during the day, listening to keynote speakers such as Pitchfork's Jessica Hopper, activist Brother Ali and former Midnight Oil frontman Peter Garrett. Come its conclusion on September 11th, the levels of exhaustion were matched only by the sense of excitement about the music scene in Australia. Here are five acts that caught our ears.

KOI CHILD

1 Getting Tame Impala's Kevin Parker to produce your debut album is a sure-fire way to have a line snaking 'round the block for your midnight showcase. But given the strength of their live show Perth's Koi Child don't need any help from big name endorsements. The coming-together of a nu-jazz quartet and a hip-hop trio (led by dynamite MC Shannon Cruz Patterson), this seven-piece collective are chaotic, unpredictable, and seriously fun. **DARREN LEVIN**

POLISH CLUB

2 Judging by the number of industry insiders crammed into Polish Club's set at Oh Hello, their days as unknowns are soon to be over. And rightly so – the Sydney duo are a rock & roll fireball, and Novak's golden vocal cords carry enough soul and emotion for a dozen bands. **ROD YATES**

SAHARA BECK

3 Brisbane singer-songwriter Sahara Beck is only 19, but she shows such an assuredness and confidence you'd think she'd been fronting bands for decades. Possessed of a voice easily able to both howl and croon, Beck and band deal in a muscular version of Western Swing, a heady mixture of high-oc-



1



4



5

tane blues-a-billy punk & roll that takes from venerable roots and morphs into something new and unique. **SAMUEL J. FELL**

GOLD CLASS

4 Industry chatter leaches off an act at Bigsound for a variety of reasons. Mostly it's PR bullshit, but sometimes it can be traced to a simple, refreshing source: a kinetic new group presenting a united front. Melbourne post-punks Gold Class were the dissonant golden ticket this year, frontman Adam Curley's sonorous voice in stark contrast to the whirring racket of his band, electrifying a



3



packed Black Bear Lodge. Less a showcase, more a statement of intent. **MARCUS TEAGUE**

METHYL ETHEL

5 The sound at The Elephant's outdoor stage was akin to watching a gig in a washing machine, but the raw talent of Perth "it" boys Methy Ethel absolutely cut through. Songs off their *Oh Inhuman Spectacle* LP were as swirly and psychedelic as you'd expect live, with singer Jake Webb's elastic voice soaring above the warped riffs. No less than three booking deals were inked off the back of this show. **D.L.**

The Party Never Ends For Kiss

More than four decades after forming, the legendary rockers return to Australia

WHEN KISS FIRST TOURED Australia in 1980, they were, says frontman Paul Stanley, “prisoners of the hotel”, such was the pandemonium surrounding the band. “It was amazing to be front page news every day and to meet some incredible people and some equally incredible women,” he titters. Thirty-five years on, Kiss are returning once again this month, bringing with them their ‘spider’ stage production. Stanley checked in ahead of the tour to reflect on the band’s career.

You’ve been doing this for 42 years. Is there anything left for you to learn about playing live?

I’m pretty good at it. But that doesn’t mean I enjoy it any less. What happened with time is I cherish what I do that much more. So to be up onstage, I don’t know how much I have to learn at this point, but I savour what I’ve created and what the fans give back.

Is there an era where you think the band was at the peak of their powers creatively?

People tend to see that initial surge as the high point, and quite honestly I think we’ve eclipsed that. I believe that *Sonic Boom* [2009] or *Monster* [2012] are as good as anything we’ve done, it’s just that anything that’s classic has to go through a period of time. “Psycho Circus”, “Lick it Up”, those are now classics, but they weren’t



SHOUT IT OUT LOUD Says Stanley (right, with Gene Simmons), “In terms of firing on all cylinders, we’ve never fired on more efficient cylinders than we do now.”

classics when they came out. So in terms of firing on all cylinders, we’ve never fired on more efficient cylinders than we do now.

2015 marks 40 years since the Kiss Alive tour. Is that hard to process?

It’s hard to digest it. Forty years is a lifetime, and to think that I’m doing today what I did then, nothing’s really changed. This has been my life. If 40 years is a lifetime, well, it’s been mine.

Any plans to follow up the ‘Destroyer’ and ‘Love Gun’ reissues with more from your back catalogue?

We’ll see. At the moment the plate’s full, but tomorrow the phone may ring and

someone will say, “Why don’t you go in and remix *Rock and Roll Over*?” Who knows. Each day brings a new surprise.

So there’s no strategy? That seems odd for a band like Kiss.

No, none.

For all the adoration Kiss receives, is there anything you don’t think you get enough credit for?

I get all the credit I need from the people who count. And the people who don’t give credit don’t count. If you deny the truth, then why would I waste my time? I only have time for the people who share my beliefs. I’m not here to make converts. **R.Y.**

COUNTRY

Ballerini



KELSEA BALLERINI: NASHVILLE IT GIRL

Why the 21-year-old could inherit Taylor Swift’s kingdom

Nashville may never get over Taylor Swift abandoning country for pop, but Kelsea Ballerini is doing her best to ease the pain. The 21-year-old singer’s flirty, self-assertive debut hit, “Love Me Like You Mean It”, was the first song by a female artist to debut at Number One

on the U.S. country chart since Carrie Underwood’s 2005 hit “Jesus, Take the Wheel”.

Ballerini is an avowed Swift admirer, and the admiration goes both ways – Swift took to Twitter to praise the younger star. When Ballerini was a teenage songwriter, one record exec even told her she was too much like her hero, criticism she ended up using to her advantage. “You can’t be who your inspirations are,” she

says. Ballerini recently proved that “Love Me Like You Mean It” wasn’t a fluke hit when her second single, “Dibs”, became the most added song on U.S. country radio. Her debut album, *The First Time*, is full of songs that balance strong will and vulnerability. “I’m so weird and quirky and painfully awkward sometimes,” she says. “I sing these songs because I need to remind myself to be confident.” **BEVILLE DUNKERLEY**



NEW ALBUM

Parkway Drive's Big Gamble

The Byron Bay metallers throw caution to the wind on their fifth full-length, 'Ire'

IN THE EUROPEAN SUMMER OF 2013, the members of Parkway Drive gathered in a field in Leicestershire to watch Rammstein headline Day Three of that year's Download Festival. It wasn't that they were huge fans of the German metallers, but they'd heard about the band's fire & brimstone live show and wanted to check it out. Little did they know that evening would help change the course of their career. "It was incredible on so many levels," recalls vocalist Winston McCall, sitting in the ROLLING STONE office on a recent trip to Sydney. "We watched a band that spoke a handful of English words control 100,000 humans in an hour-and-a-half set, and I was glued to that stage. That's what's possible with artistic vision. It wasn't like, 'Let's go be Rammstein', but let's think a bit larger to what we're used to doing."

In truth that discussion had already started internally some months earlier, as Parkway Drive emerged from recording their fourth record, 2012's *Atlas*. Traditionally the Byron Bay quintet would start writing new material quite quickly after

recording an album, but this time nothing came. "All we could think of, or all I could think of, was I really want to do something different," McCall explains. "It was getting to the point where we'd done the same thing for 10 years, and it's not like we disliked the sound, but if we played faster it was going to turn into noise, if we played heavier we'd start losing the melody. It was a real 'what are we going to do?' moment, and we all came to that point separately without knowing."

"All I could think was, I want to do something different," says McCall.

More confronting was the moment the band's sound engineer of eight years, George Hadjichristou, approached the singer during the *Atlas* tour and told him he wasn't cutting it. "He was like, 'You're getting sloppy.' I did some exercises and he was like,

'No, the power's going.' People didn't realise it because we have a genius front of house guy who would work wonders, but it was like, 'Fuck.'" Hadjichristou advised McCall to get his throat checked, telling the singer "if you're gone you may as well start looking for another job". Luckily the news from the specialist was good, and McCall's vocal cords were [Cont. on 34]





INTO THE DEEP END

"This was the record where we said, 'Let's gamble,'" says vocalist Winston McCall.

[Cont. from 33] deemed to be in good working order. Fearing that a decade of screaming over Parkway Drive's ferocious metalcore had trashed his throat, the diagnosis was a revelation for the frontman: "I was like, 'Shit, I can learn to sing!' I've always thought my vocal cords were screwed so I wouldn't be able to sing."

As he started taking lessons and learning voice techniques, the knowledge he acquired meant that, for the first time in his career, McCall felt "like an actual musician". All of which only strengthened his conviction that the band's fifth album had to be a departure. "This was the record," he says, "where we said, 'Let's gamble.'"

Writing sessions progressed slowly – McCall estimates they demoed "Vice Grip", the first single off their new album, *Ire*, almost two years ago – as the quintet carved out their direction. A keyword was restraint – play less so there's more room to layer the guitars and more room for the melodies to stand out. "It was a big ego blow," says McCall. "We never learned the basics [when we started], we just learned what we wanted to learn, which was go schiz all the time!"

The final piece of the puzzle was the choice of producer. In the past Parkway Drive had worked with some of the scene's biggest names, such as Adam Dutkiewicz and Matt Hyde. This time they went with George Hadjichristou, their live sound guy, who was largely untested in the studio, save for having worked with a handful of unknown country artists. Fearing that their fanbase would jump to conclu-

sions and pre-judge the record before even hearing the music, the band kept the decision to themselves, right up to the release of the album last month. "We held back that information because we wanted to release this record and have it be judged on [its actual] sound," says McCall. "The whole time George has been with us he's been like, 'I listen to you every night live and I have not heard captured [on record] the same feeling that I see and hear out the front, and I really think I can capture it. On top of that, this time around I think your band's capable of more.'"

With his brother Dean engineering, Hadjichristou recorded *Ire* over a three-month period in Canada. At one point they welcomed a three-piece string section to play on the song "Writings on the Wall", instructing them to make it "sound like the music you'd hear on a street corner [in occupied Poland] during World War II".

With all this talk of "singing" and string sections, it's worth noting that *Ire* is still very much a brutal album, not least when it comes to McCall's lyrics as he spits venom at the government's response to the Bentley Blockade ("Fractures") and bullying ("Bottom Feeder"). There is, however, the very real sense that from this album on, Parkway Drive's sonic future remains unwritten. "So much of this record was a big, I hope we can pull this off," says McCall, "so we wrote in a way that was reserved to a certain degree 'cause we didn't know what we were capable of. The next time we'll have a much vaster knowledge of what we're capable of doing." **ROD YATES**

"It was getting to the point where we'd done the same thing for 10 years."

CHECKING IN

LITTLE MAY'S BRUSH WITH THE NATIONAL

"Brighton is really cool," says Little May's Liz Drummond, recalling the Sydney ensemble's recent Great Escape sojourn in the dreary English seaside resort. "It was really cold when we were there, but it was appropriate for the kind of mood we were all in. Annie [Hamilton, guitar] actually saw Nick Cave walking down the street one day!"

Little May won huge gains with last year's self-titled debut EP, playing sold-out shows in London and appearing at CMJ, Germany's Hurricane Festival, Bonnaroo, Splendour, and more. "We played Gentlemen of the Road, and got up and sang 'Atlantic City' with Mumford & Sons, the Vaccines, Wayne Coyne and Jenny Lewis," Drummond recalls. "That was definitely the highlight of my life!"



Debut long-player *For the Company* was recorded earlier this year with the National's Aaron Dessner in New York. "Making the album with Aaron was the biggest, most mind-blowing experience of our lives," Drummond says. "Our manager just reached out to Aaron, and he got back to us. I think we all came back very different musicians. I was playing a Telecaster for the whole album, which is Aaron's, and Annie got to play his Firebird – that guitar is the nicest thing I have ever heard and seen."

As Drummond relates, Dessner imparted a "lightness" to proceedings. *For the Company* champions Little May's trademark ethereal melodies and slow-building compositions, while expanding on the band's indie-folk sound with pitch-perfect intensifiers from 'pulsing synths' to strings. In Drummond's own words, "it's really warm, and it's really rich". **GARETH HIPWELL**

New Wave, Hi-Fi Headphones

On-ear headphones are growing up: Cans with thick enclosures, overemphasized bass and conspicuous logos are fading out, making way for a new class of lighter, more svelte, less showy headphones that have a more balanced

sound (and are much less fatiguing to wear all day). Not all of the best new models have cords, either: Recent improvements to Bluetooth technology have brought great sound to wireless models too.

JESSE WILL



Lightweight Killers

Plantronics Backbeat Sense \$249

This wireless set has a clever trick: Take it off, and it instantly pauses your song; put it on again, and the tune resumes. Despite smaller 32mm drivers (other sets on this page use 40mm ones), the sound is immersive, and at less than five ounces, you'll barely feel them.



Professional Sound

Audio-Technica ATH-R70x \$499

Audio-Technica have aced it with these beautiful open-backed professional phones. You can wear these for mammoth mixing sessions without any fatigue and they sound phenomenal.



Pure Precision

NAD VISO HP30 \$349

Canadian company NAD is known for gear that reproduces an accurate, unexaggerated sound; in developing its smallest headphones yet, engineers found a way to elevate bass without suffocating the rest of the sonic spectrum. And this corded set folds up for easy travel.



Luxury Bluetooth

Bowers & Wilkins P5 Wireless \$599.95

The aluminum-and-leather P5 has the build quality of a Bentley and lush sonics to match. Now you can get it cord-free: The wireless uses the aptX codec for better-sounding Bluetooth. And if you still want the fidelity of the wired version, just plug in the included cable.



Cheap Cord-Free Chic

Urbanears Plattan ADV Wireless \$99.95

If bulgy black headphones aren't your style, you can opt for the ADV Wireless in one of 12 colours, each of them logo-free (and most of them subtler than tomato-red). The sound is solid for a sub-\$100 wireless set, it can remember the last eight devices paired with it, and the washable headband qualifies it for knock-around daily use.



SUPERCHARGE YOUR IPHONE AUDIO

Let's face it: Plugging a portable headphone amp/DAC into your phone to turn it into an audiophile-grade source is a pretty hardcore move. But not only can the OPPO HA-2 power even the most demanding headphones (with sound that rivals the compa-

ny's acclaimed CD players and HA-1 desktop amp) while doubling as a backup phone battery, it's slim and sexy-looking, too. And at \$499, it's affordable for its category: Portable high-end amp/DAC combos can go for as much as \$2,500.

BRIAN HIATT



HANGING ON THE TELEPHONE
 “I had a lot of self-destructive tendencies,” says Grant.

PROFILE

John Grant Lets Go of His Past

Singer's personal resurrection continues with third solo LP
 By Craig Mathieson

SUCCESS HAS COME COMPARATIVELY late to American singer-songwriter John Grant, and for that the 47-year-old is relieved. “When I was younger the desire to escape was so great that I would have embraced fame wholeheartedly and I wonder if I would have lived to see my forties,” admits Grant, who talks about his life with a self-analytical tone that can quickly be engulfed by passion stemming from a troubled past. “I had a lot of self-destructive tendencies.”

A gay man who was diagnosed HIV-positive in 2011, Grant now resides in Reykjavik, sharing an apartment with his graphic designer boyfriend. His 2013 solo LP, *Pale Green Ghosts*, earned him a nomination as Best International Male Solo Artist at the Brit Awards, while Sinéad O'Connor invited him to collaborate, but he worries that his growing profile will undermine the calming domesticity that's made him content.

On the title-track of his third (and best) solo album, this month's *Grey Tickles*, *Black Pressure*, a record of hushed 1970s torch ballads and vintage electronic soundscapes, Grant rails against the oft-received advice that “you must learn to let go”. He both despises the phrase – and admits to cutting people out of his life who've previously said it to him – and knows that it is painfully true.

“Each one of my records is an exercise in letting go of things from the past, things from my history of anxiety and fear that have led me to want to control my environment,” Grant explains. “You simply can't control things in this world and the sooner you figure that out the better.”

Grant, who is on the bill for next March's WOMAdelaide festival in Adelaide, grew up in a conservative household in Colorado, and from an early age homophobic abuse impacted his life and tempered his relationships.

“As somebody who was constantly, day in day out for decades, attacked verbally, I've

had therapists tell me I'm walking around with PTSD. When I went out into the world I was in fight or flight mode, which leads to adrenalin fatigue,” says Grant. “You end up projecting that onto your present surroundings, which is often inappropriate.”

The Denver-based alternative-rock band he fronted, the Czars, ran from 1994 until 2004, when Grant called time on the group because all his bandmates had departed due to a lack of commercial success and the difficulty of working with him (Grant started going to AA soon afterwards). His twenties and thirties were wracked by resentment, depression, addiction and poverty, but Grant's begun to right himself, leading to solo albums that are remarkably complete: candid, evocative, detailed, and drily funny.

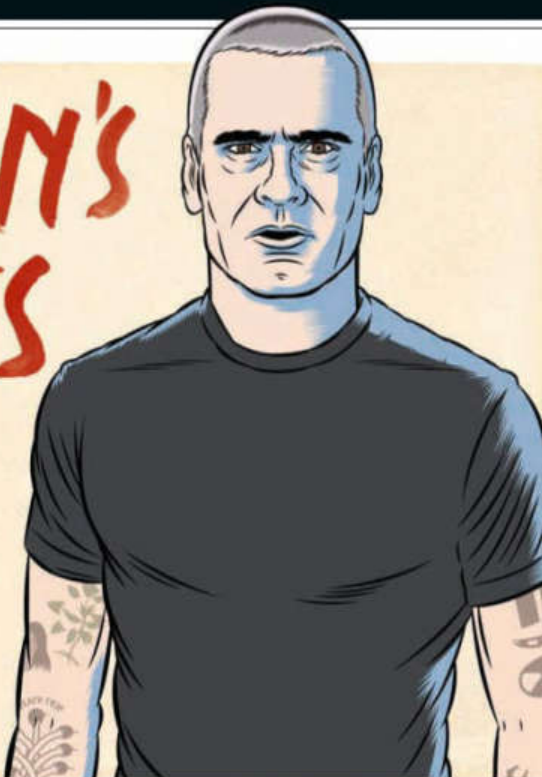
“I want to fill them up with all the things that I like and sometimes what I don't like,” notes Grant. “I'm better at embracing the fact that I can write a song and not really doubt myself. Now, I feel a sense of accomplishment after writing a song.”

“I've been told I'm walking around with PTSD.”

A FAN'S NOTES

BY HENRY ROLLINS

Our man in the van hits the road in search of new adventures



I AM AN ANGRY PERSON. NOT AT you! Angry at life, I guess. Not the fact that I am alive, or that it's not always fair, but angry that I can rarely make life go at the speed I want, get it to rock as hard as I want, tell me enough, teach me enough or show me enough. About 99 per cent of the time, I just want more.

This is no bad thing. Dissatisfaction can lead to great things. For me, it pours petrol on the raging fire that is my curiosity. This is why I travel as much as possible.

If I'm not obligated to 10 things at once, I hit the road and take whatever work I have along. I have met deadlines from here to Islamabad.

For me, it's all about location. I want breakfast, but in Cairo and then in Casablanca. One of the only times I feel I am not wasting my life is when I am onstage or on the move.

I had a few weeks this year where I could hit all my marks from different IP addresses, and found myself on a small boat on the Napo River in the Amazon Basin region of Ecuador. Some eco-tourism but for the most part, it's just you, the river and overwhelming biodiversity. Every creature, be it monkey, dolphin, bird or insect, and every bit of vegetation had as much beauty and dignity as any person I have ever encountered. It was beyond humbling. I predict Ec-

uador will sell out to big oil and timber and lose it all. My only regret was that I had to leave.

Via Santiago, Chile, I went to Easter Island. Great. Almost amazing. Six thousand locals host 80,000 visitors annually on a small island that's showing the effects of almost no recycling. The moai at Ahu Tongariki was worth the trip.

I returned to Los Angeles depressed, to what I consider a full fail: comfy couched eventless existence. An hour in, I snapped out of it and headed for the gym. I need to increase my strength

and stamina levels for an upcoming trip to Antarctica. On it!

I am a nobody. I am where I have been, what I have seen and learned. I reckon the world and everyone in it is far more interesting than I will ever be, so the more I get out

into it, the better. When I'm at my best, I'm an adventurer, a lightweight explorer, someone who understands that the only way to know is to go. There is nothing special about me. I can loaf and procrastinate with the best of them. That's why I don't have a television. I'll watch it.

Since I was young, I had this idea of a man who was never around because he was always "out there", coming back with a sweat stained pith helmet, amazing stories and cool scars. I always wanted to be that guy. Eighty-nine countries so far. I'm giving life hell.

"I am a nobody. I am where I have been, what I have seen and learned."

EXPERT OPINION

Chuck D

With a new Public Enemy album out now, we asked the rebel without a pause to tell us what he thinks of five songs.

CLASSIC

The Rolling Stones "Honky Tonk Women"

Their performance at Hyde Park in 1969 struck my beat bone. The Charlie Watts fill in the second verse over Mick's vocals is damn near hip-hop! It inspired a rapped interpolation on our new album.

N.W.A

"Fuck tha Police"

Ice T and King Tee got on base about police brutality - then N.W.A hit it in the upper deck.

Isaac Hayes

"Hyperbolic-syllabic-sesquedalymistic"

Public Enemy's Bomb Squad used to crowd in a room and play mix-and-mash records. This song had a snatch that stood out. I ran it into the end zone as "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos".

NEW

Kendrick Lamar "King Kunta"

I can dig the fact that Kendrick cares less if you can maintain balance as he chops into the listener's head. He fills every space with a lot of nerve.

DJ Snake and Lil Jon "Turn Down for What"

This is one of those songs where the hook can go on for 15 minutes vamping. James Brown seemed to invent that.



MY SOUNDTRACK

Robert Forster

The former Go-Between takes time out from listening to AM radio and discovers some B-Side gold By Cameron Emerson-Elliott

The Song That Reminds Me of Growing Up

Creedence Clearwater Revival "Have You Ever Seen the Rain", 1970



"I grew up in Brisbane, with no older sibling with a record collection, and my parents weren't all that interested in music. When I was 11 or 12, only listening to AM radio, I was captivated by Creedence. It was just John Fogerty's voice. He sounded like no-one else at that time, everyone else was very sweet and chirpy, and Fogerty sounded very rough. It's almost their most folk-rocky number – there's still bass and drums, but there's an acoustic strum that just melted me. Fogerty's voice, the funkiness of the group, they were very real for Top 40."

The Song People Wouldn't Expect Me To Like

Passenger "Let Her Go", 2012



"Big pop song. His voice is quite irritating, and the production is a little bit wet. But beneath it is a great song. Someone even vaguely hip could cover that, and everyone would go, 'Wow, that's a good song.' But anyone with an inch of hipness just hated it when it came out."

The Song I Play Air Guitar To

Television "Venus De Milo", 1977



"Grant [McLennan] and I would play air guitar to this. In 1978 we lived in a house and would play *Marquee Moon*... 'Venus De Milo' is probably close to my favourite ever recording. It's beautiful. The guitars, you just get lost in them. And that solo, it's a perfect guitar solo. Tom Verlaine's guitar tone, it's very floaty and he's just picking these notes. Instead of 'diddle-diddle-diddle', like every other guitarist in a mainstream American group, especially in the Seventies, trying to play faster than the band, Verlaine plays slower, and so the guitar solo dreams and skips. I would stand there on the couch and

just be air guitar to Tom Verlaine. Even now, my children catch me. You know, I only have to hear anything off *Marquee Moon*, but especially 'Venus De Milo'."

The Song That Cheers Me Up

The Kinks "Waterloo Sunset", 1967



"I love listening to Ray Davies' vocal, it's like he's just throwing it away, and it's just an amazing melody. It's got a lot – that almost power chord bit, and then that almost Beach Boys bit, and that verse. Those three chords that've been around for a million years, and Ray manages to put a new melody over it. The lyric is perfect. I hear that on the radio, and it cheers me up because it is the perfect pop song. I don't think Lennon and McCartney ever wrote a better pop song than that. 'I Want To Hold Your Hand', 'Ticket to Ride', do they touch 'Waterloo Sunset'? It's just seamless."

The Song I Want Played At My Funeral

Sarah Blasko "We Won't Run", 2009



"I'm DJing at my funeral. It's going to come as a surprise to the mourners. They'll come out of the church, and they'll go to the marquee, and I'll be on stage – with those headphones that DJs have around their necks, and they'll see me on a platform. I'll be playing Sarah Blasko's 'We Won't Run' as they come in. I might even be in trainers and some sort of plastic, groovy mac. It'll be like, 'He's DJing!' I'm blasting out Blasko – she might even be there. That could be a shock for her."

The Song That Gets Me On the Dancefloor

James Brown "Sex Machine", 1970



"I've never been a clubber. But if I was going to be on the dancefloor, it'd be James Brown, *Sex Machine*, I love that. In Glasgow, in the Eighties, there was a cult around that song, and I was part of that cult. I like that beat."

The Song I'm Most Proud Of

The Go-Betweens "Darlinghurst Nights", 2005



"It's all about Darlinghurst, 1984. The Go-Betweens spent a lot of time around there then, we'd come back from England, and then I wrote this song about that in 2004. I loved writing the lyric, and I could just get all these people in – Frank Brunetti, who used to be in Died Pretty, and was a music journalist on *RAM*; Clinton Walker is in it. It's a song that really no-one else could have written but me – for better or worse. It's a song when I play it, I just go into it and I know that in five minutes, everyone's just gonna be very happy in the audience."

The Song I Wish I Wrote

Simon and Garfunkel "Bridge Over Troubled Water", 1970



"It's one of the great song titles of all time. Imagine walking into a practice room and you say to your band, 'I've got a new song', and then someone says, 'What is it?' And you go, 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'. People would just go, [slaps table] 'That's amazing!' Even before you play a note. I'd just be happy to come up with that song title. I love the song because it's huge, and it just feels natural and real. It never for a second feels bombastic to me. I love the position that the person singing the song has: it's 'I'm the helper', 'I'm the rescuer' – ultra romantic. Great song. I'd love to have written something like that."

The Song I Want To Cover

Bad//Dreems "My Only Friend", 2014



"It's an incredible song. Neil Young or Noel Gallagher would just be on their knees to this song. My son turned me onto this – it originally came out as a B-Side. He had the single and he flipped the record over and just said, 'Listen to this.' And the B-Side killed the A-Side. It's like an Australian classic."

“

Even now my
children catch
me playing air
guitar.”

”





At home with Dave Graney and Clare Moore, 1996

Photographed by Bloddyn Butcher

"In November 1996, Dave Graney was the reigning King of Pop," recalls snapper Bloddyn Butcher. "At the ARIAs two months before, he'd crowned himself with a luxurious wig, cut in the leonine style actor Peter Wyngarde affected when playing the Last of the International Playboys, Jason King. Graney was dressed in a pink, crushed-velvet suit, a jackpot spray of tacky medallions and a knuckleduster emblazoned 'DAVE'. Jaws dropped, eyeballs popped, bellies ached. The peacock had landed, the peacock had ascended the throne! Soon enough *Black+White* magazine, the 'art photography' journal, wanted in

on the action. They had a music-themed issue coming up. Would Dave be interested? He'd have to get some of his fabulous gear off but he could of course keep the wig. Dave wasn't remotely fazed. He'd give 'em skin, if that's what they wanted. He drove straight to the nearest opshop and bought himself a pair of pre-loved leather chaps. He also bought a long string of sausages. This would be his costume: bangers'n'chaps. We took the photos at the house he shares with Clare Moore in the Dandenongs. Dave was washing the Kingswood when I arrived, Clare was doing her nails."



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THE FUTURE IS NOW

We profile 10 of the hottest artists who are climbing the charts, breaking the Internet or just dominating our office stereos . . .

I KNOW LEOPARD

SOUNDS LIKE: Sweeping, textural, harmony-laden pop so warm and melancholy it'll give your ears a big hug.

FOR FANS OF: Local Natives, Beach House, The Jezabels

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Frontman Luke O'Loughlin met guitarist Todd Andrews in Adelaide over 10 years ago, but it's only in the past two years that the now-Sydney based quartet have locked in their line-up and started gigging and releasing music in earnest. Two well received EPs – last year's *Illumina* and September's *Another Life* – and epic national tours both as headliners and supporting San Cisco and Gang of Youths have seen the band grow their audience, while they started 2015 by winning the Triple J Unearthed competition to open the Sydney Laneway Festival. Oh, and their violin-tinged Like a Version cover of TLC's "Waterfalls" will make you see the song in a whole different light.

THEY SAY: "When *Illumina* came out we'd finally decided on our sound and that EP was solidifying [that]," says O'Loughlin. "We've got that as a base now and we felt more comfortable to expand and be a bit more experimental [on *Another Life*]. The album will continue that trajectory."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The perfect pop of "Close My Eyes".

ROD YATES





JACK COLWELL

SOUNDS LIKE: A recording session nose-diving off a cliff, swimming for its life and rising, phoenix-like into the sun. Colwell plumbs his depths and succumbs to his manias.

FOR FANS OF: Passionate, unfettered singer-songwriters such as Tori Amos, PJ Harvey, Rufus Wainwright and Patrick Wolf.

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Outside of his solo work, Colwell has been in demand arranging and conducting music for the likes of Karen O, Architecture in Helsinki and Vivid Sydney. As his own man, he's

opened ROLLING STONE's Live Lodge series and has had his video clips singled out by *Rage* for his past two releases. Given his stint at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, his songwriting is as dramatic and sensuous as any orchestral piece, exploring pitches, depths and textures. His EP, *Only When Flooded Could I Let Go*, has saved on a good decade's worth of therapy bills by being the cathartic conclusion to a young life of domestic violence, sexual abuse and intense relationships.

HESAYS: "The EP is part coming-of-age and part dealing with my sexuality in a chang-

ing political and social landscape, learning how to navigate my way through that as a young person. They're introspective songs with a narrative, and I'd hope that some people might hear them and take comfort in the fact that they're not alone. I was a pretty manic person in the past, but I'm a lot more devil-may-care these days."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Five-track EP *Only When Flooded Could I Let Go*. Watch the video – a fine piece of drama set in a gay bathhouse – to single "Don't Cry Those Tears" on the ROLLING STONE website.

JENNY VALENTISH



DUSTIN TEBBUTT

SOUNDS LIKE: If the sun hitting an early morning frost had an official soundtrack, this would be it – intimate indie folk designed to warm the heart when you're feeling the chill.

FOR FANS OF: José González, Bon Iver, James Vincent McMorrow

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Hailing from Armidale, Tebbutt grew up with instruments at his disposal thanks to a musical father. Two years living and recording in Sweden yielded 2013's acclaimed EP *The Breach*. A return home has led to the aptly titled *Home* mini-album, a further expansion of Tebbutt's delicate brand of folk.

HE SAYS: "On *Home* I've been refining things, and to me it sounds like a continuation of the *Breach* and [2014's] *Bones* EPs – it's one big body of work that's me finding my feet, and now I've got a good starting point [for what's next]. I'm writing now with a clean slate and I've collected the tools I would've liked to have had three years ago."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Mini-album title track "Home", a prime example of Tebbutt's richly produced, low-key heart-string tuggers.

JAMES JENNINGS

GRAVE PLEASURES

SOUNDS LIKE: Goth rock for metalheads, Interpol with balls
FOR FANS OF: Joy Division, Misfits, the Sisters of Mercy, Killing Joke

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Finland's Beastmilk were sharpening the cutting edge of both goth and post-punk when, shortly after the release of their 2013 debut *Climax*, they split with guitarist and major songwriter Johan "Goatspeed" Snell. Enter Grave Pleasures, the new venture of Beastmilk singer Mat "Kvohst" McNerney and bassist Valtteri Arino, which picks up where that band left off. Cut in a haunted recording studio – "It was getting so irritating with this ghost coming in and out [of the halls] that we considered getting an

exorcist in!" says Kvohst – the group's new LP, *Dreamcrash*, is a grim yet grooving album of self-described "apocalyptic death-rock" that draws on the band members' backgrounds in metal outfits including Dødheimsgard and the Oath. "I write catchy, almost pop melodies [but] I'm still here to do the devil's work," Kvohst says. "Albeit in a slightly different presentation. It's black magic."

THEY SAY: "I grew up as a goth and a black metallar," the singer says of his band getting slapped with the "goth" tag. "I just saw it as being an outsider, which you were back then. These days everyone has some gothic style – even people into hip-hop or dance music – and it's all crossed over into the



melting pot of modern fashion. But back in the Eighties and Nineties, it was about making a clear distinction that you were different and wanted to be an outcast. It took some guts to be a goth back then, I tell you! You were victimised by kids at school but, at the same time, were part of a rare group of outsiders who

listened to sombre and melancholic music as an escape from the modern world and your social standing. It was about freedom."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "I pay all my dues to the dark," Kvohst croons on "New Hip Moon", a shimmering, swirling blood pool of romantic gloom.

BRANDONGEIST

POLISH CLUB

SOUNDS LIKE: Percy Sledge doing whisky shots with the Sonics while the Strokes wait their turn to join in.

FOR FANS OF: The above mentioned acts; soulful rock & roll that thunders like a locomotive that could derail at any time.

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Sydney born vocalist Novak owes his accent to his upbringing in Belgium, where students from the international school he attended “all came out sounding Canadian” for no apparent reason. The singer’s family relocated to Europe for his father’s work, where he immersed himself in “cheesy Eurotrash and Nineties R&B”, while his mother’s background as a singer in the Philippines meant showtunes reverberated around the house on a regular basis. Clearly he inherited his mother’s singing genes, as Novak’s soulful voice is

the honey that coats an otherwise raucous collection of retro soul songs he writes with drummer John-Henry, whom he first met at high school in Sydney. After plying their trade in various post-high school acts the duo found themselves in a rehearsal room last December, and in that first session wrote six songs, which they recorded several weeks later. It wasn’t long before offers came through to support the likes of Courtney Barnett, Regurgitator and Gang Of Youths, while the band’s self-titled debut EP is released this month. “The songs are pretty damned simple,” says Novak. “They’re all two-and-a half minutes max, and they’re all about girls and dancing! We’re not reinventing the wheel, we’re just doing what comes naturally.”

THEY SAY: “By the end of our gigs we are a crumbling mess,” laughs Novak. “Do the old verse, chorus, verse, chorus, two minutes, and do it as high energy as we can and as intensely as we can and make it as loud as we can make it, without passing out. And I think if we were to break the three-and-a-half minute mark it would be too much. Half our EP is a bit more slow and has some more dynamics and isn’t just a punch in the face, but it’s more fun every now and again to bang one out as quick and loud as you can and try and make your band-

“

By the end of our gigs we are a crumbling mess. We do it as high energy as we can.”

mate die in the process.”

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: First single “Able”, a perfect example of the band’s maxim that they write pop songs 50 years too late. Ragged, soulful and addictive. **ROD YATES**





TIMBERWOLF

SOUNDS LIKE: A joyous ode to music – channelled through the blues with some country nous and rock inflection – that's not afraid to utilise a good pop melody to quieten things down or amp them up.

FOR FANS OF: The Middle East and Fleet Foxes, Clapton and Hendrix, lovers of melodic poetry set to a primal beat that grows and grows and blossoms into an eclectic yet coherent slab of modern folk.

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION:

Timberwolf's set at Bigsoud last month showcased a raw talent in Chris Panousakis, who builds big songs from little seeds, utilising the blues as a base before moving away and creating something new and unique. There's a lot of talk about this 24-year-old Adelaide-based artist, and with good reason

"I'm always going to be a progressive songwriter. I move on quickly."

– his lyrics are poignant, his music captivating, his motives pure.

HE SAYS: "I'm always going to be a progressive songwriter... and even in the past two years, it's come a long way. I move on quickly, and as long as the roots are there – my voice, my lyrics

and my melodies, they're quite consistent – the other production around it, I can imagine that constantly progressing. Because that's how I am as a character; I like to discover new things and embrace new things... [so] there's a huge progressive element to my songs. There's a lot of dynamic within the

set, but there's a similar groove."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Timberwolf's latest EP, *Flux*, showcases this eclecticism to a tee. Produced by the Middle East's Mark Myers amidst the humid gloom of Cairns, it throbs with a low intensity, an eerie paean to life, love and loss.

SAMUEL J. FELL

COLD BEAT

SOUNDS LIKE: Tales of urban alienation conveyed through resolutely catchy post-punk songwriting and bolstered with rich vocal harmonies.

FOR FANS OF: Ex Hex, Wolf Parade, La Luz

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Cold Beat's second album, *Into the Air*, reaffirms Hannah Lew's penchant for writing songs that are at once ebullient and subtly sinister. And, as always, the use of vocal harmonies is excellent. What's different here is an expansion of the band's range: They can still simultaneously evoke the Zombies and punk anthems, but there are also songs that make much bolder use of keyboards and electronic elements, playing up the sense of dread and alienation inherent in the group's music.

THEY SAY: Lew contends that there's a more collaborative aspect present on *Into the Air*. "I invited people to participate a little bit more, to try that out with the project," she says. "I think you hear a few differ-



ent voices on the record." But the electronic elements are also critical. "I've been leaning more towards making electronic music with less people. I'm in awe of bands that just play rock music for a long period of time. I think it takes a lot for that to be sustainable."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Cracks" addresses a sense of perpetual disquiet, but the emphasis here shifts away from guitars and towards an ominous synthesized earworm.

TOBIAS CARROLL

TUNDE OLANIRAN

SOUNDS LIKE: Exuberant and socially conscious electronic pop from the home of underground resistance.

FOR FANS OF: M.I.A., Dev Hynes, Kele Okereke

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Tunde Olaniran's full-length debut, *Transgressor*, is only the tipping point for a self-sustaining multi-disciplinary force that can sing empowerment anthems with passion, spin party raps with confidence and humour, and produce his own dance tracks. He also choreographs his performances, which often involve costumed dancers moving in unison to the beat. Offstage, his writing recently appeared in the an-

thology *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories From Social Justice Movements*. "I have a really busy schedule," says the Nigerian-American, who has a day job at a Planned Parenthood office in Flint, Michigan.

His social activism is present in *Transgressor* highlights such as "KYBM", where he calls on his fellow activists to "keep your body movin'" over a kinetic number that flips from a trap thump to a bracing house rhythm. As the lyrics of "Diamonds" make clear, Olaniran's projects have hardly made him wealthy, despite the critical acclaim given to his work. "I didn't have a couch for three years," he says. "I prioritise the stuff that makes me happy, like being able to design something and have it be creative."

HE SAYS: "The idea of transgression is really interesting to me, whether it's being a musical artist who's black and male and you're not doing a certain kind of music [such as mainstream hip-hop or R&B]," says Olaniran. "It only becomes transgression in the eyes of the reacting society. Sometimes, the reaction is kind of violent and more extreme than the act itself, whether it's blocking traffic on an expressway to make people stop and think about [#blacklivesmatter], or it's a woman deciding she's going to not follow in the path that's been laid out for her. A lot of those themes are in the lyrics and the album."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: In album highlight "Brown Boy", Olaniran and his friends twine, twirl and declare their otherness.

MOSI REEVES



PIERCE BROTHERS

SOUNDS LIKE: Folk-rock and acoustica with unmistakable Aussie heart

FOR FANS OF: Xavier Rudd, John Butler, Glen Hansard

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Melbourne twins Jack and Pat Pierce have played Bigsound, Falls Festival, the Great Escape (UK), Canadian Music Week, the Edinburgh Fringe, and Pinkpop (NL), sell-out shows in London, and packed out Richmond's legendary Corner Hotel twice. The duo's European debut – at the Netherlands' Lowlands Festival in 2014 – drew a crowd of more than 5,000 peo-

ple who, to the brothers' surprise, not only sang along, but actually knew the words. "That day, we ended up being the highest selling act of the festival," Jack recalls.

"Later on, we were backstage, and Skrillex came up to us and gave us a cuddle and said, 'I'm so proud of you!' And we were like, 'Thanks, Skrillex!'" A genuine grassroots success, the Pierces have independently sold tens of thousands of EPs – thanks in large part to their relentless busking ethos. Last year's *The Night Tree* EP debuted at No. 21 on the ARIA Albums Chart. They've inked deals with Mushroom, Warner and Sony's RCA imprint in

Europe. The brothers have supported Dan Sultan, and were selected to join the Cat Empire on the band's 2015 European tour. Their new EP, *Into the Dirt*, was produced by Jan Skubiszewski (John Butler Trio).

THEY SAY: "Pat plays the stomp-box and the kick-drum," Jack explains. "He also plays acoustic and electric guitar. I'll play acoustic or electric guitar, or I'll play the floor-tom with djembe, or didgeridoo, or harmonica – and I'm always playing the tambourine with my foot."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Infectious summer jam "Overdose".

GARETH HIPWELL

"Skrillex came up to us and gave us a cuddle and said, 'I'm so proud of you!'"



A portrait of Jaakko Eino Kalevi, a young man with long, wavy brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a solid, dark grey color.

JAAKKO EINO KALEVI

SOUNDS LIKE: Immersive, synth-riddled soft-rock.

FOR FANS OF: Ariel Pink, Tame Impala, Unknown Mortal Orchestra

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: The long-haired Finnish dynamo crafts warm and warped pop dreamscapes on his self-titled debut album. He's making his Australian debut this month, including a stop at ROLLING STONE's Live Lodge in Sydney. But his sudden rise in profile doesn't mean people

are starting to spell or pronounce his name correctly. "In Finland it's three very common names," he says. "I think the first name is the hardest [for others]. People who write me back are like, 'It can't be two 'a's and two 'k's.' So they correct it."

HE SAYS: "I don't really translate. If something comes in Finnish, then it's kept in Finnish." Still, most of the 31-year-old's lyrics are in English, while the music is steeped in the soft-focus cool of *Avalon*-era Roxy Music – complete with sax solos. Kalevi normally begins with a beat "and then I start to build on them", but lately he's been more focused on melodies first. Now based

in Berlin, he has his own studio there as well as one he's building in his parents' home, three hours north of Helsinki. Until

The Finnish dynamo crafts warm and warped pop dreamscapes.

recently he drove trams for a living, but his employers refused to schedule shifts around his inevitable time spent touring. Then they suddenly gave him a shift without asking. "I think it's a way of getting rid of me," he laughs.

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Recent singles "Double Talk" and "Deeper Shadows" are perfectly gooey and ghostly places to start, but his falsetto-guided earlier track "When You Walk Through Them All" is also worth seeking out.

DOUG WALLEN



MEETING OF



With Grinspoon coming out of retirement to support Cold Chisel on their upcoming tour, vocalist Phil Jamieson sits down with Jimmy Barnes and Don Walker to discuss Chisel's new album and the history of one of Australia's greatest bands

Interview PHIL JAMIESON | *Words* DAN LANDER

Photographs JOSHUA MORRIS

THE MINDS

T

UCKED AWAY in the one corner of Sydney you'd least expect to find it, the Barnes family enclave is a rambling, brilliantly converted warehouse, humble and spectacular at the same time. Two ramshackle tables – each of which could comfortably seat 10 – line the front-room-cum-kitchen, testament to the fact that, while this may principally be home to one of Australia's best-selling singers and his wife Jane, it is also a much-loved refuge for the family and friends the couple have so warmly welcomed into their world over many decades.

On this sunny early-spring afternoon, the house is a hive of activity. Inside, Jane is offering drinks and preparing a gorgeous, homely lunch. Outside, in a courtyard littered with potted citrus and succulents, Barnes is playing host to an odd couple: old friend and Cold Chisel keyboardist Don Walker is posing – a little awkwardly – for photos with Grinspoon frontman Phil Jamieson. But, as you watch, it becomes apparent that Barnes isn't actually playing host at all; in fact, he's just trying to decide which jacket to wear – suede, or some sort of shiny thing.

"Oh fuck it," he says eventually, returning to the photographic fray (in suede, to start with at least). As he does, something becomes apparent – Barnes and Jamieson are two peas in a pod. Like a couple of Jerry Lewis's to Walker's Dean Martin, the two swap poses and punchlines, somehow hamming it up and keeping it honest simultaneously. Walker is there between them, the wise man who knows that as lucky as we are to have personalities like Barnes and Jamieson, well . . . they probably need him as much as he needs them.

Half an hour later, the three have settled over that lunch Jane was laying out earlier to talk about their music. Cold Chisel are about to release their 12th album – *The Perfect Crime* – and, then, head out on tour; Grinspoon are set to reform after two years apart to support.

It seems like a "big moment". But, then, Jamieson's first comment has Walker and Barnes laughing like schoolboys: "Why did you guys decide to do a new record? That's the last thing I would want to do!"

Former editor DAN LANDER writes about Ash Grunwald in this issue.

After the hysterics die down, a classic discussion about being in a band in Australia begins, with Jamieson playing de facto interviewer to a couple of the country's favourites . . .

No, but seriously, you didn't have to make a new album, and we all know it can be tough. So, why go through that again?

Barnes: We want to play live, and we don't want to just be a retro act. Back in the day we were a live band, we toured everywhere, and once we started making records, all the pressure was about making records. And that was why we broke up, we didn't have time to sit and enjoy what we were doing anymore. Going back now, we can enjoy it – we can tour when we want, we can make records when we want. We're back to the reason we wanted to make music in the first place. So to do that we want to make new songs, we want to challenge ourselves and each other, and to challenge the audience a bit too.

I find that sometimes the more records you make, the more difficult it can become.

Walker: I think this one was easier, because everyone involved knew how it works. The last record [2012's *No Plans*] was the first time working with [producer] Kevin Shirley and the first time working with [drummer] Charley [Drayton] and we were feeling our way. But this time, everybody knows how it works, everybody knows what everyone has to do and we

But seriously, Don was encouraging us to write all the time, and for me, every one of the writers has been a big part of the band, but there's something about having the bulk of the songs Don's songs that makes that Cold Chisel sound. His songs are what defines Cold Chisel as a band.

So the dynamic in 2015 is pretty much the same as it was in 1980?

Walker: Yeah. For me personally, with this album I wanted two things. I wanted it to be a lot more bluesy with no country on it – for some reason, I can't tell you why.

Barnes: That's a country song right there. [Laughs]

Walker: And I wanted it to be a much more diverse album with the writing and where the writing was coming from. And I think to a certain extent we got both of those. Probably still could have been a bit more diverse in sourcing the songs, but that's the way it's ended up. But where the five of us come from musically is so wide – the idea that you could get where I come from musically, and where Jim comes from musically and where Ian [Moss, guitar] comes from musically and Phil [Small, bass] and Charley, into the one recording is something only Kevin could figure out.

Given all the personalities in the band, did you guys ever have mad fights?

Barnes: Not about songs. But we fought about everything else. Normally drunk after gigs. We've had a few good fights. The five of us are so different, personality and musically, that eventually you butt heads

“We’ve had a lot of good fights,” says Barnes. “The five of us are so different, personality and musically.”

know that it's going to work, so you can just concentrate on the music.

There are four songwriters in the band, so how does that get handled? Are you [to Don] always telling everyone, “My song’s better?” Because I know that’s what I do. [Much laughter]

Barnes: I tell everybody [Don's] songs are better! I was in there going, “What do we have to write fucking songs for? I just want to sing his songs.”

So even back in the day, that’s never how it worked?

Barnes: No. We were lazy bastards, and Don wrote the songs, and we liked those songs. But Don was always encouraging us to write, almost like pulling teeth.

Walker: Until the money came in.

Barnes: [Laughs] Yeah, and then we all went, “Fuck, I’ve got a song! I’ve got four!”

occasionally. There was a point where Ian wanted to play [jazz guitarist] Larry Carlton and I wanted to play Lemmy. And they just weren't going to meet, so it was like musically, there was this tension all the time. But those differences, those natural tensions, are what made the band.

Yeah, that’s part of the beauty of it.

Barnes: Yeah, it really is.

[Pause]

Walker: Yeah, I could do without it myself. [Much laughter]

Barnes: Yeah, true. It worked for us, but it was a pain in the arse sometimes. We all fought with each other at different points. And some people had regular fights with regular members – like me with everyone!

There was a real push for you to go into America in the early Eighties. How did that work out?



For Those About To Rock

(Above) Jimmy Barnes onstage during 1983's Last Stand tour.

(Left) Cold Chisel today (l-r): Charley Drayton, Don Walker, Jimmy Barnes, Ian Moss, Phil Small

Walker: That was a disaster.
Why?

Walker: [Long pause] Why... how long have we got?

Was it his fault [points to Barnes]?
[Much laughter]

Walker: No, no it wasn't Jim's fault. You're trying to start a fight, aren't you?

Barnes: [Laughing] But it was a bad time for America when we went there. Music was in a really weird place. I remember years before we actually went to the U.S., before we got signed [in Australia] and thinking, "Ah fuck, these people just don't get us, we're going everywhere, playing everywhere and record companies won't even look at us, so we'll go to America. They'll get us. They get rock & roll, we'll go there." Eventually, when we did go there, they didn't get rock & roll at all. They didn't know what was going on with it. It was the Eagles and shit like that everywhere, and we just came at the wrong time.

Walker: We only went over there for five weeks, but I remember someone from a record company, in *Miami Vice*-vibrant-pastels, said to me, "You know, you guys, we had another Australian punk band through here a few years ago called the Dingoes." So that sentence summed it up. We were completely the opposite of punk.

Barnes: And we liked the Dingoes.

Walker: And for somebody to be coming from an environment where us and the Dingoes were punk, well...

That doesn't make any sense.

Walker: Doesn't make any sense at all. But that's where they were from.

Barnes: When we arrived in America the first time, we walked into Elektra Records, and found out they'd released "My Baby" as the first single, which we knew they were going to do, but they'd sent it to radio stations wrapped in diapers.

Oh no.

Barnes: Yeah. So it was all really just down hill from there. Just to think that someone thought, "We'll send it in diapers, that'll be amazing!"

What about Europe?

Walker: Yeah, we tried a few times in Europe and that was going much better. The tour that we effectively broke up on was a tour of Germany, where it was all open, it was all waiting for us, we'd done our support acts, and we were doing a 50-date headline tour, and-

Barnes: Don fucked it up! [Laughing] No it wasn't him, but even then Europe was a bit of a weird thing. Because they would keep asking, "How are you going in America?"

Ah, right, so it was "versus".

Barnes: Yeah, they were playing us off against each other, and we're thinking, well, it doesn't matter, it's a different market. And of course, the meathead rockers, the ones who really like rock & roll, like Germany, Sweden and pockets in Britain liked us a lot, and the rest really didn't get it.

So why was that the last tour?

[Long pause, punctuated by sighs, laughs and groans]

Barnes: We were fighting a lot. And we were getting frustrated with each other. We were getting frustrated with the lack of progress that we were making overseas, I think, a bit of that.

Walker: At the time, the way it seemed to us was that [drummer] Steve [Prestwich] lost the plot, in Germany, just when we were on the verge of a breakthrough. But people outside the band were telling us, "The shows aren't that bad, you shouldn't worry." But we were convinced that they were.

Barnes: Steve would do things like not look at us on stage. And we'd be trying to communicate, like, "Speed it up", and he wouldn't notice, and so there was just no communication in the band.

I know those kinds of shows. I know it.

Walker: And there'd always been that, but somehow, that tour of Germany, he just-

Barnes: -he dug his heels in, didn't he?

Walker: Yeah. So we came home. Sacked him. Did a tour to try to raise some money with another drummer. That was the end really.

Who was that drummer?

Barnes: Ray Arnott. From the Dingoes!

Given that sort of ending the first time, how's the relationship now between the four original members?

Walker: Pretty good. It's a lot easier, because we're not doing this all the time. Mostly we make music elsewhere, where as then, we were just all in the bottle together.

Barnes: Well, we still have our moments. [Much laughter] But we can play when we want now. But being in a band is difficult. I mean, me doing my own thing, and Don doing his own thing, we know that being the dictator has its own benefits.

Walker: It's hard not being in charge.

Barnes: Yeah, it's hard. [Big laugh]
Yeah, I see.

Barnes: But you have to relinquish that when you walk into the room. The beauty of the band is all these different things coming into it, and eventually it sorts itself

out – he's in charge of certain things, I'm in charge of certain things, Ian's in charge of certain things. You all bring your own things to the band.

Did you guys pay a lot of attention to what everyone else in the band was doing during the years you weren't together?

Barnes: We always knew what everyone else was doing. And once we'd had a bit of space after we first broke up, we've always been pretty close. We've always stayed in touch, we've always liked each other's company. We socialise, you know.

Don, you helped Ian write songs for his first solo album, but not for Jim. Jim, did that make you angry?

Barnes: [Laughs] No, not at all. I wish he had though! [Laughs again] It took me years to get him to write one. *Heat* was the first time Don wrote one for me, "Stone Cold".

Walker: Just so you understand, Jim's a bit of a passive-aggressive, so, "I'm not angry" means...

Barnes: [Nods at the cutlery] Just move the knife away...

Did you want [Moss's hit single] "Telephone Booth"?

Barnes: I wouldn't take it if you paid me! [Laughing] But look, I finished in December of '83 with Chisel, and then I was in the studio in April. I had a bunch of songs that, actually, I had written that didn't suit Cold Chisel, we'd demoed them and didn't use them, and I went in and recorded them. Whereas Ian, he's always taken a bit more encouragement to get moving, so Don sort of helped him getting his solo career going.

Walker: By the time Ian and I started working on songs for his first album, four years had gone by and Jim had put out four albums and had hits and everything.

I remember, I was in grade seven! [Laughs] So, why did you pick Grinspoon to tour with you on this coming Chisel tour?

Barnes: Because you're a good band. *Not because we're cheaper than Silverchair?*

Barnes: [Laughing] No, because you're a good band. And I thought that last tour, on the Sunshine Coast, that gig we did with you was one of the great gigs and your band just murdered it. It was great.

We had the best time. Your crowd enjoyed us, and we had so much fun watching you guys. And there was catering!

Barnes: So why did you guys break up – was it all of you just sick of each other?

I don't know. It was seven albums in, and 18 years, and we just thought we needed a break. We love each other, we're great friends, but maybe we were getting a little tired – creatively and also emotionally.

Barnes: Will you make a record?

I don't know. Everyone's had different things to do in their life. I've got a proper job for the first time ever, which is weird.

It's a change from like, well, what age were you when you started your band?

Barnes: I was 17.

Right. Same.

Walker: And I was 22.

And how did you meet each other?

Barnes: They had the band together. Ian, Don, Les [Kaczmarek] the original bass player and another drummer. And they wanted a singer – they wanted my brother. They were going to try John [Swan] first.

Walker: I knew John. But there was no way John was going to sing with us.

Was he a big deal?

Walker: Yeah, he was making money and doing things. He did a couple of nights with the band I was in before, just filling in, and he was the most exciting thing I had ever seen.

So you got the little brother instead. Do you remember meeting Jim?

Barnes: Women's liberation hall.

Walker: Women's Electoral Lobby Hall.

Okay!? Of course it was...

Walker: That was our initial rehearsal hall. We actually used to have a good relationship with the, what's the acronym these days, LGBT, whatever it is. There was a couple I knew and somehow that hall came up, and they were hiring it to us and they were really lovely.

Barnes: Yeah, so I went to a rehearsal with them, and that was so early in it all that I can't even remember the drummer's name.

Walker: No, me neither. But I remember

Barnes: After about five or six months of rehearsal, Don went back to university to do his Masters in Armidale. So we followed him up there and we played all around that area for a while, but after about six months of that, we moved back to Adelaide and started playing pubs, doing covers – Free, Deep Purple, shit like that – without Don. Don finished his degree and came back, rejoined the band. In the meantime we'd been lazy bastards, all waiting for Don to write the songs. "Okay Don, you've had all that time off, doing a Masters degree, doing fuck all..."

So Don came back with a bunch of songs and by that time we were getting a good name in town for a covers band. We decided to learn this whole set of originals and went and did our first gig with them, and it fucking died in the arse. We emptied the room. You could hear people walking past the stage saying, "What fucking happened!? They used to be really average!"

So, was it that the originals weren't necessarily bad, they just weren't what people wanted?

Walker: No, they were bad. [Laughs]

But there must have been a point when the original stuff started to work.

Barnes: Well, in '75, I left. My brother John continually talks me into doing things, and he talked me into leaving Chisel and joining Fraternity when Bon Scott left and joined AC/DC. And at that point, after I had been away for three or four months, they went to Sydney and

"On the Last Stand tour," says Barnes, "we'd do a gig then party for 12 hours, then do another gig the next night."

what he did when Ian and I went around and saw him to tell him he was sacked.

Barnes: [Laughing] Do you!

What did he do?

Walker: After finding a way out to his place – a bus and a train to suburban Adelaide – we knock on the door to tell him he's sacked, and he pokes his head out the door. And Ian and I, typically sheepish, were like, "Man, really sorry, but, well, you're sacked", and the screen door just went "bam"! And so there's Ian and I in deep suburban Adelaide, looking at each other like, "Huh, I don't think he's going to come out again."

So was that at the stage when you were getting gigs around town?

Barnes: Nah, we hadn't even worked yet. We were just rehearsing covers.

At what point did the originals seep their way into the set?

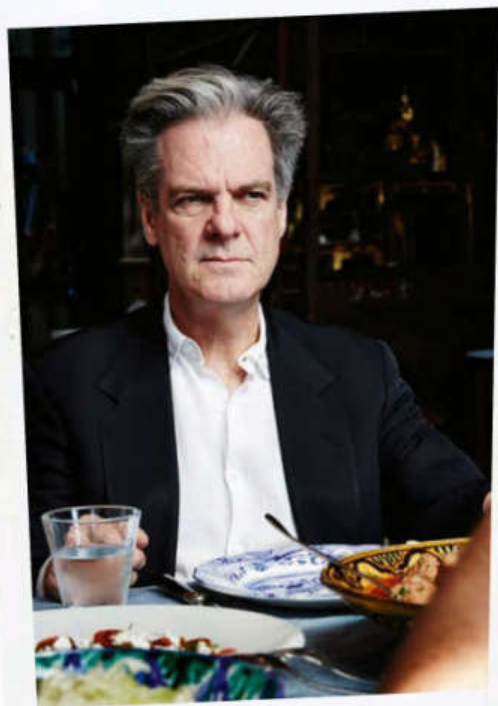
did demos at Trafalgar Studios, and they played Sydney and Melbourne...

Without you? Who sung? Mossy?

Barnes: Yeah, Ian. And I saw them when they came back, and it was like Spinal Tap. I was standing there watching them and thinking, "Fuck they're good." So I went and jammed with them a couple of nights and then joined again. Made them feel like I was really necessary.

What was it like the first time you went into the studio?

Barnes: The first album we did with Peter Walker, we had no idea what we were doing. We liked Bakery, the band that Peter was a member of, great Perth band. And we spent six weeks or something in the studio – we'd record and then sit and talk for four hours about what compression does to the sound, and I just



wanted to stick pins in my eyes. But we were all trying to soak up what we could and learn as much as we could. Second record, we really liked the sound of what was coming out of Alberts, and so for *Breakfast At Sweethearts*, we decided we wanted to go to Alberts. Nobody told us there were two Alberts! We went to Alberts Two, which was a shit room. And the record company wanted us to get a name producer, they wanted us to get more of a pop sense. And Richard Batchens had produced *Goodbye Tiger* [by Richard Clapton] and a whole bunch of pop songs, and he was a “producer”.

Ah, yeah, I know the type...

Barnes: So we went into the studio with him, and it was absolutely disastrous – we were in a shit room with this bad tempered cunt. But don’t quote me. Don’t say he was bad tempered. [Much laughter] I can safely say we all had a pretty bad time making that record. But they were good songs.

Walker: Although, [Batchens] made it clear to me that they weren’t quite as good as Richard Clapton’s songs...

Barnes: The next record that Batchens made was with my brother, and Swanee was in the vocal booth, and he’s asked Richard a question, and Richard was a bad drunk, just nasty, and Richard said, “Just shut up and sing and I’ll make you sound good.” So Swanee walked in and knocked him out. [Laughs]

But by the third album, ‘East’, you had figured it out?

Lunch Date

From left: Don Walker, Jimmy Barnes and Phil Jamieson, photographed at Barnes’ house on Friday September 11th.

Walker: With *East*, Mark Opitz found a way to set us up that worked, so we could record and feel like we were playing live together.

Barnes: And by that time we had done a lot of touring, playing to big crowds, we were a sharp band.

Walker: Confident. And we had done enough in the studio to not be “just a great live band”. Often great live bands just can’t do it in the studio, but we could by then.

Did you know it was good at the time?

Walker: Yeah.

Barnes: It felt good. We were all really bouncing off each other. It was good.

At the other end of the spectrum, what was the Last Stand tour like in 1983?

Barnes: It was hard work, because everywhere we went, it was the last time that we were going to be there. So we’d do a gig and then party for 12 hours with all our friends there because it was the last time you’d see them, and then you’d have to do another gig the next night. Every night was the last night that you were going to see that audience. That went on and on, and it was also stressful because we were breaking up, we were going through all sorts of shit at the time.

How was the relationship within the band?

Walker: Not good. It was pretty dysfunctional in every direction.

Barnes: It was a weird feeling – some of the shows it was splintering and falling apart, but some of the shows it was really good, and so there was this mixed feeling of, “Fuck, I’m sick of this band, I want to get out”, and then also, “Fuck this band is good, and this is the last gig.”

Walker: The band was always good on stage.

But in between...

Walker: Yeah. Everything else.

Did you consider not doing a last tour?

Walker: No. We were going to break up, we knew we’d have to do a last tour.

Barnes: And finish with Steve.

Walker: That was what was good about that last tour.

Barnes: It gave some resolution.

Walker: Yeah, because there was never any question that playing with Steve was always fantastic. Apart from that trip in Germany. When he came back he was as good as he’d always been.

Well, hopefully these shows coming up are just as good. These are very important shows for us. Especially for me, because these are the first time my daughters are going to be there to see it in a way they can remember. So thank you for the opportunity, it’s going to be really special.

Barnes: Well, you should jump straight from the stage into a record then. Richard Batchens is available! [Much laughing]

Walker: And I’ve already written the songs...

READY FOR THE WEEKND

From broke and homeless in Toronto to the top of the charts: Meet 2015's most unlikely pop superstar

— BY SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON —

THIS IS THE YEAR OF THE WEEKND. Look around, the signs are everywhere: In July, the 25-year-old Canadian singer performed his absurdly catchy hit “Can’t Feel My Face” for 83,000 screaming Taylor Swift fans after she brought him out as a surprise guest at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. In August – by which time “Can’t Feel My Face” had shot to Number One on the U.S. charts – Stevie Wonder sang a few bars of the song at a concert in New York’s Central Park. Earlier this year, Katy Perry said his steamy single “Often” is her favourite song to have sex to. “I don’t know if I’m on top of the world,” says the Weeknd. “But I’m on top of my game, for sure.”

It’s past midnight in Brooklyn’s Brighton Beach neighbourhood, and he’s hiding in his trailer on a break from an all-night video shoot. Outside, passersby – some Russian-accented locals, some teenage superfans – crane their necks for a glimpse of him. “It’s hard to walk down the street now,” he says, fiddling with five or six pairs of sunglasses on a table. “But I worked for that.”

“Can’t Feel My Face” is one of three U.S. Top Five smashes he’s scored this year, along with the plush, romantic ballad “Earned It” and the stormy jam “The Hills”. “He’s one of the biggest artists out right now, and he’s just getting going,” says Sharon Dastur, senior vice president of programming at radio giant iHeartMedia, which has the Weeknd in rotation at pop and hip-hop stations. “Not a lot of artists hit Number One this quickly and navigate all those formats.”

A few years ago, pop domination was the last thing the Weeknd was aiming for. He kept his real name (Abel Tesfaye) and face hidden on his first releases in 2011 – a trio of dark, druggy R&B mixtapes that sounded like they’d been recorded toward the tail end of a *True Detective* orgy. When Republic Records senior vice president Nate Albert flew to Toronto that spring to court the Weeknd and his manager, they shut him down. “I thought there was no reason he couldn’t end up being a big pop voice,” says Albert. “But they had no interest.”

After pursuing him for another year and a half, Albert – a rock lifer who played guitar in the Mighty Mighty Bosstones before becoming

an A&R exec – was able to persuade the Weeknd to sign with Republic. But the singer’s full-length debut, 2013’s *Kiss Land*, stuck with the mixtapes’ claustrophobic, hazy sound. Even a guest verse from early supporter Drake couldn’t get it to register with mainstream audiences. “*Kiss Land* wasn’t about what people wanted to hear on the radio,” the Weeknd admits now. “It was the state of mind I was in – introverted, like David Cronenberg’s *Naked Lunch*.” (Albert compares the album to Weezer’s *Pinkerton*: “As hard as it was not to have the massive success he probably wanted, I think it galvanised his fan base.”)

After *Kiss Land* stalled, the Weeknd fell into a rut. “I just kept getting more depressed,” he says. He considered relocating from Toronto to Seattle in search of a “super-drugged-out Nirvana vibe”. Instead, after writing and scrapping an album’s worth of material, he started spending time in L.A. and listening to his label. Republic got him a choice placement on the *50 Shades of Grey* soundtrack with “Earned It”

“Taylor Swift’s audience can listen to me, but so can the street kids. I want to touch it all.”

and set up a duet with Ariana Grande on her club-ready single “Love Me Harder”, produced by synth-pop wizard Max Martin. The Weeknd and Martin reunited for “Can’t Feel My Face”, and he cites the Swedish maestro as a major influence on the rest of his new album, *Beauty Behind the Madness*. “At one point, I didn’t care,” the Weeknd says. “Now I want as many people to hear my music as possible.”

Even so, he hasn’t completely left his roots behind. On the new LP’s “Tell Your Friends”, a power ballad co-produced by Kanye West, the Weeknd paints a bleak picture of his misspent youth, singing about being broke and homeless, his nights filled with substance abuse, meaningless sex and petty theft. “As soon as I stepped foot in the city, it was a feeling I got addicted to,” says the Weeknd, who moved to downtown Toronto at 17 after being raised by a single mother in the suburbs. “Lights, no sleep – either you’re going to make it or die trying.”

The Weeknd says he sees no contradiction between that side of his personality and his bright, glossy radio hits. “I feel like I’m changing pop culture,” he says. “Taylor Swift’s audience can listen to me, but so can the street kids. I want to touch it all.”





YEAR OF THE
WEEKND
"I'm on top of my
game for sure."

"I'm owned by the people. I'm no angel, but I'm going to do right by them."

Trump Seriously

By PAUL SOLOTAROFF

Photograph by MARK SELIGER

HEY, YA MADE IT, great to see ya!" says Donald Trump, having just stepped aboard his throne room of a plane and stopping by my seat to extend his hand. "You get the big tour yet? No? What the hell? C'mon, I'll show you myself." ★ I follow him into the stateroom of the 757, past three rows of sleeper seats wrapped in eggshell calfskin, with seat-belt buckles of plated gold and the family crest stitched in every headrest; past the conference centre, with its mahogany table and a dozen executive high-backs snugged around it; past the in-plane theatre, with its oyster-shape couches and the 57-inch flatscreen tuned to Fox; past the bumped-out bulkhead



THE FRONT-RUNNER
"I don't start these fights,
but I sure as hell win them,"
Trump says of Fox News.

and the first of two bedrooms, this one fitted with mohair couches that convert to a full-size bed; and then the master bedroom, with its silk-spun walls and bathroom fixtures finished in rosy gold.

"Not bad, you agree?" calls Trump over his shoulder, leading me down the corridor to the cockpit. "I bought this from Paul Allen and gutted it top to bottom. It's bigger than Air Force One, which is a step down from this in every way. Rolls-Royce engines; seats 43. Didja know it was featured on the Discovery Channel as the world's most luxurious jetliner?" (Fact-check: It isn't bigger than Air Force One, and it was featured on the Smithsonian Channel. But in this, as in much of what Trump says, it's more about the broad strokes than the details.)

After takeoff, I find him in the state-room, reading notes. "Gotta concentrate,"

is dicey however it's delivered. "Hunh!" he says. "Interesting. I didn't know that. But I gotta get back to my notes!" (At a press conference, an hour later, he'll respond to a question about heroin in New Hampshire by saying that "it starts probably with OxyContin, from what I'm hearing".) Sixty seconds pass. "Hey, you believe this goddamn ISIS? Chopping people's heads off, putting people in cages and drowning 'em. We gotta waterboard 'em, don't you agree?"

I tell him I'm not in favour of chopping people's heads off, and ask if he'd sanction waterboarding as president. He begins a rambling answer, then asks the woman across from me if she believes in the practice of waterboarding. And so it goes for the 26 minutes it takes us to fly from New York to Hampton, New Hampshire, where tonight he'll go on in front of 2,500 peo-

courted, and, till very lately, dismissed as a fever dream of the torch-and-pitchfork segment of the Republican Party. Entering stage far-right with wing-nut invective – the people coming across our border are "rapists" and "killers" who routinely commit "great amounts of crime" – he has dominated the race since the day he got in it and posted a large and durable lead ever since. The caveat: His negatives are through the roof. About a third of registered Republicans likely to vote next year say they'd never pull the lever for him.

In all the hysteria, however, what's often missed are the qualities that brought Trump here. You don't do a *fraction* of what he's done in life – dominate New York real estate for decades, build the next grand Xanadus for the super-rich on the far shores of Dubai and Istanbul, run the prime-time ratings table for more than 10 years and earn a third (or sixth) fortune at it – without being immensely cunning and deft, a top-of-the-food-chain killer. Over the course of 10 days and several close-in encounters, I got to peer behind the scrim of his bluster and self-mythos and get a very good look at the man. What I saw was enough to make me take him dead serious. If you're waiting for Trump to blow himself up in a Hindenburg of gaffes or hate speech, you'll be waiting a long, *long* time. Donald Trump is here for the duration – and gaining strength and traction by the hour.

Begin with his message and mode of delivery. Standing over his shoulder, I watched Trump use the press to speak directly to his base, talking past the cameras and microphone banks to that furious demographic of working and out-of-work factory-town families who saw their wages set like cement in the 1980s and watched the spoils and tax breaks swim upstream. When we landed in New Hampshire and pulled in to a Hampton high school in his motorcade of stretch SUVs, Trump was mobbed by reporters with the pushy fervour of kids seeking a pop star's autograph. He batted aside their questions – Iraq, Russia, immigrants – to buttonhole the hundreds of people milling outside, unable to get in but listening on speakers, and the thousands more seated down the hall.

"I built a net worth of more than \$10 billion. I've been a world-class businessman.... That's the thinking that our country needs. Take our jobs back from China and Japan and Mexico.... Take a look at China.... We owe them \$1.4 trillion... because we're led by people who don't have a clue. Honestly, I think we're led by stupid people."

There, in those words, is his campaign. *I am strong; politicians are weak. I speak truth and never retreat; they lie and wave the white flag to our foes. They have stripped us bare; I will build us back, make this country feared the whole world*

“I’m at the point in my life where I could do *anything*. I said, ‘I’m going to take the risk of running for president.’”

he says. "I'm speaking in front of thousands. After the rally, we'll have plenty of time to talk."

This seems fair, though we've spent hours in his office and haven't gotten around yet to a single policy question, beyond his assurance that we'd touch on "all that stuff" later. I buckle in to watch the campaign coverage when he asks me if I know what inversions are. "Uh, no," I say, thinking I'm in for a tutorial about wind patterns at 30,000 feet. "It's when companies leave America and take thousands of good jobs with 'em. What do ya think of that, does that sound fair?" he says.

"Well, no, it doesn't. But what would you do about it in your first hundred days?"

"Yeah, I gotta remind myself to talk about that tonight. But I'm busy now! I really gotta prep!" He burrows into his notes, marking a section in ballpoint. Not 60 seconds pass before he looks at me again. "You know New Hampshire has a huge problem with heroin? Why do ya s'pose that is?"

I tell him that it probably has to do with OxyContin and school kids raiding their parents' medicine chests. They run out of pills, then find that bags of heroin are cheaper. "Yeah? Well, which is worse for you, the heroin or the pills?" I explain that they're both derivatives of opium, which

ple, a crowd to thoroughly dwarf the several hundred people who've turned out to watch Jeb Bush and Rand Paul speak in the state. In those 26 minutes, he'll devote some 90 seconds to his typewritten notes, diverted instead by the mentions of him on Fox and the crowd of whims and tangents in his head. To sit alone with Trump is to be whipsawed and head-snapped by his sentences that start and stop, his thoughts that take hard detours or suddenly become questions in midstream. But as I learn in Hampton, exactly none of this will matter once Donald Trump takes the stage. The second those klieg lights hit him, he'll find his maestro voice, that nimble and knowing schoolyard brogue that doesn't miss a trick or a chance to pounce. Besides, he'll say the exact same unscripted things he said in Michigan days earlier and will say again tomorrow at the Iowa State Fair, all of it word for word from memory. You may lament Trump's message, but you can't move him off it. It's like trying to stop a 757.

THIS PAST JUNE, DONALD John Trump rode down the escalator in the five-storey, pink-marble atrium of Manhattan's Trump Tower to declare his candidacy for president of the United States. Since then, he has been mocked and reviled, worshipped and

This is PAUL SOLOTAROFF'S first feature for Rolling Stone Australia.



over. Everything he utters is a version of this, dressed in different raiment or reference – and he’s saying it to people, his “silent majority”, who have longed to hear these words since Richard Nixon. “He’s delivering a message of power and courage without any proof points called *policy*,” says Steve Schmidt, the Republican wise man and campaign warhorse who’s been watching Trump with mounting fascination. “A huge chunk of conservatives are unmoored from the issues. What moves them is his tone and attack on Republicans who they hold in *complete* contempt.”

In the airless auditorium, the faithful are packed so tight that it feels like a breeding barn with a PA system. They are the young and the old, the blue- and white-collar, the white and, well, white-haired. He has a pitch-perfect ear for their curdled resentment and a ventriloquist’s gift for reading it back to them in words that they think but cannot utter at work, or anywhere else but their kitchen tables. Canvassing the crowd before he comes on, I hear the same phrases over and over. “Finally, someone’s saying what *we’ve all* wanted to say – we’ve been pushed too far for years,” says Tina, a gym-toned mum in a sleeveless top. “I like that he’s not politically correct – we don’t have time for that here,” says Lise, a frost-tipped blonde in the row behind her, calling Trump “another Ronald Reagan.” “He means what he

THE CAMPAIGNER

Trump in Alabama. He has a simple message: *I am strong; politicians are weak.*

says, and says what he means,” says a converted Democrat named Dino. “The other guys, they got marbles in their mouth – you don’t even know *what* they’re saying.”

Trump takes the stage to a standing ovation. His speech goes the way it always goes. “They had 24 million people [at the debate the other night].... Do you think they were there for... Rand Paul? Rand, I’ve had you up to here!” He touches his armpit, zinging the vertically challenged Paul: “He didn’t like it when I said you have to pass an IQ test to get up on the stage.” Then he pivoted to Carly Fiorina. “Carly was a little nasty to me – be *careful*, Carly! Be *careful*! But I can’t say anything to her because she’s a woman.... I *promised* that I wouldn’t say that she ran Hewlett-Packard into the ground. I said I wouldn’t say it! That her stock value tanked. That she laid off tens of thousands of people, and she got viciously fired. I said I will not *say* that. And that she then went out and ran against Barbara *Boxer*, and... lost in a landslide. And I said, ‘I. Will. Not. Say. That!’”

The enormous audience leaps to its feet in eruptive, rocking laughter. And for 58 minutes, he goes on like this, playing the crowd like a Telecaster. *Mexico’s taking your jobs. Ford and Nabisco*

are fleeing there. No more Oreos for Trump! What’s most striking is the ease with which Trump does it – no note cards, no teleprompter, no prep in the car. Running his first race for office at 69, an age when other men are seeking help for bladder conditions, he gives every impression of being born for this – and of having the time of his life.

A WEEK OR SO EARLIER, I’D been summoned to Trump’s office at his glitter-bomb cathedral, Trump Tower. It is hard to overstate the effect of the building on your sense of dimension and place. You walk into a lobby that is half-Vegas, half-Vatican, a vaulting altar of brass and obsidian that soars halfway to heaven, where they serve dark-roast. There’s a Starbucks somewhere up in the sky-high atrium, not far from the 18-metre waterfall. You fight the urge to dunk your head in the pool where it collects, and try, instead, to regain your wits on the whooshing ride up to the 26th floor.

There, you are met by the first in a series of dazzling young female assistants. Trump also likes the theatrics of beauty. Many of his close aides are women in their twenties not very long removed from college. Hope Hicks, Trump’s communications director who, several years ago, was studying at Southern Methodist Univer-

sity, leads me into the boss's office, which is as much Trump's trophy room as workspace. Every flat surface is adorned by his image: framed magazine glossies from Important Publications, none more so, at least per Trump, than the 1990 *Playboy* where "I was one of the only men to ever get on the cover."

Trump offers me a seat by his mahogany desk. Over his shoulder looms a bust of Ronald Reagan. (There is also a bald eagle, the stuffed-animal version, for any preschool patriot who wanders in.) In an earlier sit-down, Trump had fought me to a standstill when I tried to draw him out about his past. As countless writers before me have discovered to their sorrow, there's no such thing as question-and-answer with Trump. Instead, you frame a query, then stand back and watch him go, hoping that in the monologue that follows, he touches at least obliquely on your topic. This time, he did divulge about his father, going on at length and with real feeling. Fred Trump, the second in a line of self-made magnates (his father, Friedrich, had earned his fortune in the Klondike gold rush, selling lodging, food, booze and possibly women to hordes of miners), was possessed of the singular family gift: He could see the future and beat everyone else to it.

"When the car was just coming out, houses had no garages," says Trump. "Dad went all over Queens, building garages in the Thirties, and he could throw 'em up like nothing. He had great energy and vision, worked seven days a week and liked it, and was happy in his life. I watched people take vacations, and they're miserable. Him, two hours at the beach with us on Sundays, and he was back to work."

Fred was among the first of the great wartime developers to figure out the import of Federal Housing Authority programs, vast new pots of government loans to build housing for the working- and middle-class. Trump doesn't volunteer that much of the family fortune derived from taxpayer funds, or that his father was a master manipulator of the Democratic machine in Brooklyn. Fred's *real* money was made erecting outer-borough housing for the returning vets of World War II, brick behemoths that he delivered on schedule and hundreds of thousands of dollars under budget.

Though Fred lived and died a very rich man, he made his kids work like peasants. The three boys spent summers pulling weeds and pouring cement, learning the building trade from the subfloor up, while the two girls toiled in his real estate office in the bowels of Coney Island. Trump tells the story of being dragged by the nose to join Fred on his rounds collecting rents. "We'd go on jobs where you needed tough guys to knock on doors," he says. "You'd see 'em ring the bell and stand way over here. I'd say, 'Why're you over there?' and



he'd say, 'Cause these motherfuckers shoot! They shoot right through the door!'"

Trump has raised his own kids in comparable fashion, disabusing them of any notions of unearned grandeur. "I was a dock attendant for a couple of summers, then went into landscaping," says Don Jr., a company vice president running international projects, with an office directly below his father's. "My brother and I are probably the only sons of billionaires who can operate a D-10 Caterpillar." "I did less-than-glamorous internships in sweltering New York – the South of France wasn't an option," says Ivanka in her immaculate office next door to Don Jr. Together with Eric, the third of Trump's kids by his first wife, Ivana Trump (he has two younger children by subsequent wives), his three grown offspring handle his vast portfolio of luxury hotels and resorts. Polished and restrained where their father is flamboyant, they've nonetheless paid him the highest praise by enlisting in the family trade. No less telling, none of them are train wrecks like so many children of billionaires. "We grew up with a lot of those kids and know them well," says Don Jr. "But I guess we were pushed and motivated differently."

It's worth noting that Trump was nearly a train wreck himself as the son of wealth in Jamaica Estates, Queens. An indifferent student who was "mouthing off to everybody" and carrying around a switchblade in his pocket, he was yanked out of prep school by his disappointed parents and

FORTUNATE SON

Trump with his father, Fred, a real-estate tycoon. After getting in trouble in middle school, Trump was sent to New York Military Academy.



sent to the New York Military Academy upstate. "He thought he was Mr. America and the world revolved around him," says Col. Ted Dobias, his former instructor and baseball coach, a barrel-chested man who's now nearing 90 but whose memory is diamond-drill sharp. "I had a lot of one-on-ones" with the 14-year-old Trump, adds Dobias, some of which got physical, both men say. Whatever it took to seize the eighth-grader's attention, Dobias seemed to turn him around. By ninth grade, Trump was a model cadet; as a senior, he

made cadet captain, says Dobias, and was the star first baseman for Dobias' varsity squad. "He was good-hit *and* good-field: We had scouts from the Phillies to watch him, but he wanted to go to college and make real money."

After graduating from Wharton, where his academic laurels have been grossly overstated through the years (he didn't finish first in his class or anywhere near it, and went altogether missing from the list of honours for the class of 1968), Trump began working for his old man in Brooklyn, but had little sustaining interest in low-rent units. What he wanted was to have his name writ large on the next iconic towers of Manhattan. It was the mid-1970s, when the city was swirling the drain of insolvency and structural collapse, but even from the boroughs, Trump could look ahead a decade to the gilded age of the 1980s. Seizing upon the collapse of the Penn Central railroad, the largest corpo-

rate bankruptcy in history at the time, he scooped up an option to redo the Commodore Hotel, a Beaux Arts colossus gone badly to seed as one of the troubled railroad's minor holdings.

"The area was dying, people were leaving the city, but I went to Bowery Bank across the street and said, 'If you lend me the money, 42nd Street is gonna be great again,'" Trump says. Bowery and a second firm, Equitable Life, staked tens of millions of dollars on the reconstruction. Trump strong-armed City Hall to give him an unheard-of break – full tax abatement for 40 years – and stripped the old girl of her limestone vestments, dressing her in dazzling skirts of glass. Reborn as the Grand Hyatt in 1980, the building – a great mirrored beacon to investors eager to pounce on midtown projects – came along just as the stock market soared, minting a brash generation of new millionaires.

Those young-money turks burned to tweak their stodgy fathers by flashing

TRUMP SPRINGS FROM HIS desk chair and summons me over to the floor-to-ceiling windows facing north. Below us, beyond the Tiffany Building and the Plaza Hotel, spreads the splendid sine qua non of Central Park, lush in its summer coat of greens and golds. "I mean, who *has* this location? I own this," says Trump, marvelling at his great good fortune. "I'm at the point in my life – tremendous cash flow, very little debt – where I could do anything I want. I said, 'Now, I'm gonna take the risk of running for president. We need that kinda mind to make great deals.'"

As we stand there, high above New York, gazing on the Lilliputian tourists, it occurs to me to wonder: How on Earth, from *this* vantage, did Trump see into the hearts of underemployed white folk? How did he know that they stewed and simmered over free trade, immigrants and fat-cat Republicans who'd sold them down the river for decades? How did he guess that they'd con-

every car and truck and part that comes in!' 'But you can't *do* that, Mr. President!' Trust me, I *can* do it – and what happens is, they probably fold by 5 p.m."

Never mind the pipe-dream scenario being spun, which omits that only Congress can set new taxes: The whole room shakes as if on skates. That mind-meld is what lets him flaunt his wealth and sell it as proof he's on their side. He bragged in New Hampshire about his *great* relations with China and Saudi Arabia: "They all buy apartments from me. They pay millions and millions of dollars. Am I supposed to hate them? I love them! I sell apartments for \$50 million, \$30 million, \$25 million, \$18 million, some of the cheap ones, like \$10 *million*, OK? Those are the cheap ones. I don't even sign *those* contracts." Why would he run the jewels in the faces of people who're largely living from cheque to cheque? To pound home the point that there are good tycoons, patriotic wise men like himself and his friends (Carl Icahn and Henry Kravis, to name

“So far I’ve spent zero. I’m on TV so much, it’d be stupid to advertise. Remember: The two biggest costs are ads and transportation. So I’d say I’m pretty well covered, wouldn’t you?”

their sudden wealth on shiny objects. Trump built them the gold-dust condos of their dreams, converting the dowdy Gulf and Western in Columbus Circle into a brass-and-glass playpen for Wall Street flyboys, after setting his style template with Trump Tower. That building helped revive Fifth Avenue, which, like many of New York's former talismans, had fallen into sad decline. It was also a benchmark moment for Trump: the accomplishment with which he officially eclipsed Fred as the signature builder of his age.

"So here's a story I've never told," he says, warming to the memory of that triumph. "When I was building Trump Tower, my father stood across the street and said, 'Don't use glass and bronze, use *brick*. It's better, less expensive, and no one cares about the outside. All they care about is the size of the *closets*!'" Trump laughs and shakes his head in mordant wonder, as if to say, *Oh, the humanity*. By the way, Trump has told this story many times, according to Gwenda Blair, the author of *Donald Trump: Master Apprentice*, which is due to be reissued as an e-book. "It's all part of what he does," she says, "the bragging and the repetition: It's called *branding*, and he's relentless at it."

flated those things to explain the flight of factory jobs, and that all they really cared about, besides the return of those jobs, was that someone beat the hell out of the party hacks – the Jeb Bushes and Scott Walkers and Karl Roves?

"What you've tapped into," I say, "is that people see those guys and say, '*This* one's owned by David Koch, *that* one's owned by Sheldon Adelson, and so on, and then they look at you...'"

"I'm owned by the *people*!" Trump says. "I mean, I'm telling you, I'm no angel, but I'm gonna do right by them!"

But the answer to my question is ringing in the air – specifically, in the echo of Trump's accent. He was raised around lunch-pail guys in Queens and learned to talk like them trailing his father to building sites. He shares the syntax and sympathies of meat-and-potatoes types, and has crafted his message for their ears expressly, calling out the enemies on their list. In New Hampshire, I watched that huge crowd come to a boil as he took dead aim at corporate greed. "When the head of Ford calls me up and he says, 'Mr. President, we really want to build this plant in Mexico', I'll say, 'Congratulations... we're gonna charge you a 35 per cent tax on

just two) who are itching to step in and save the country's bacon by rewriting its woeful trade deals with China and Japan. "Do we want nice people? Or do we want these horrible human beings negotiating for us? I want horrible... We will make great trade deals. We will make Social Security without cuts.... You'll have phenomenal plans – you'll have them for much less money. The insurance companies will not be happy, but, see, they don't give me money. They give to Jeb, and they give to Hillary.... I don't want their money!"

That assault on the *bad* rich, the takers and job exporters, is the second masterstroke of his campaign. He's not just spurning their money, he's spilling the beans on them, outing the ways in which they've gamed the system to enrich themselves and co-opt the Republican Party. "Because he knows Wall Street and because he doesn't need its money to campaign, it seems like he could actually fight his fellow elites and win," wrote Ross Douthat in an op-ed piece for *The New York Times* titled "Donald Trump, Traitor to His Class".

"I have senators flying in from Washington to New York, and I gave to *everybody*," says Trump in his office. "Why?

Because that was *business*: When I went to see them, they were always nice. If I'd said no, then went back to them and said I needed help on a tax code – zero chance; they'd say, 'Fuck him!' That's not a good thing for our country, but that's the system, and the public understands it better than anybody."

Nor do his conservative heresies stop there. He's called for immediate tax hikes on hedge-fund profits; tax hikes for the ultrawealthy like himself to pay for sweeping cuts for the middle class; vast spending increases on health care in general and for veterans and women in particular; huge capital investments in the country's infrastructure, beginning with roads and bridges; and a wartime-era ramp-up of the Defense Department budget to "make our military so strong that nobody would mess with us". How would he plow such mandates through a Congress that is run by the

on all the issues? Will he be able to hold his supporters together under the brunt of attack ads from the Super PACs?"

Cohn isn't convinced that Trump's constituency will see him through that threshers and beyond. "He's had total command of the media so far, and much of his strength is based on that. But popularity derived from public attention is generally thin, as we saw with Herman Cain and Sarah Palin."

Steve Schmidt, the Republican strategist, puts it somewhat more crudely: "Trump's starring in a reality show of his own making, and treats every appearance like an episode", chasing ratings in the form of fresh votes. But how do you turn appointment TV into a lasting candidacy? "You need a huge team on the ground doing the nuts-and-bolts work – collecting signatures to be on the ballot in certain states, bringing voters to the polls –

"We're up to 60 people now, including 14 in Iowa," Trump tells me, "and building huge, phenomenal teams in the first seven states. I know that costs money, but I've got this, believe me. Remember: The two biggest costs in a presidential run are ads and transportation. Well, I own two planes and a Sikorsky chopper, so I'd say I'm pretty well covered there, wouldn't you?"

Still: Trump, for all his billions, has far less sitting in liquid assets. Bloomberg ran the numbers on his FEC filing and pegged his cash on hand at \$70 million; Politico had it closer to \$250 million. Either way, it sounds like a lot of money till you factor the per-diem costs of the past couple of presidential cycles. Barack Obama spent about \$1.6 million a day at this stage of his first run, in 2007. The price tag may have doubled in the eight years since, though Trump has the cost breaks noted above, so perhaps it'll only run him the million per. But Obama was raising money as fast as he spent it, while Trump is barely bothering to lift a finger. (At last report, he'd taken in \$100,000, or about five per cent of what he's spent already.) Is he really prepared to shell out \$30 million a month, and more when the primaries roll around?

"Absolutely," he tells me. "I'm prepared to underwrite this! I make \$400 to \$600 million a year."

Last year, per the figures he himself released, he had \$362 million in income, some of that a one-time sale of stocks. This year figures to be a slimmer one: He was summarily dropped by seven business partners when he entered the race raging against "illegals". Per media estimates, he lost as much as \$50 million in those cancelled deals, the bulk of it from NBC, his golden goose. It's been a very pricey couple of months indeed for him, and that goes against the flow of his business model. Since the bad old days of the early Nineties, when the real estate market tanked and his company filed for Chapter 11, owing the banks nearly \$1 billion, he's been much more reluctant to invest hard cash. He owns very little of what gets built now bearing his name, earning many tens of millions by leasing his logo to high-end hotels and resorts. He also reaps license fees from retail products that pretty much cover the spectrum from clothes to liquor, though he's lost the great buzz machine that was *The Apprentice*, and with it, the multi-million-dollar salary that earned him \$213 million over 14 years.

But politics isn't like selling vodka that someone else makes and mass-distributes. It's the ultimate high-risk, low-return endeavour, in which \$5 billion will be spent, in total, this cycle, most of it by candidates with slim hopes. Will Trump go all-in on his bet with himself, selling off assets as he goes? Or will he turn at some point to the people he denounces – the hedge-fund guys and influence-peddlers who fund the

“I had senators flying in to New York, and I gave to everybody. That's not a good thing, but that's the system.”

very party he's betraying? And where does he find the money to do these things when he himself says we're nearing the point of no return on a deficit of \$19 trillion? His answer on this and all matters fiscal is the canard about capital clawbacks: "I'd renegotiate trade deals so that our country becomes rich again," he says, "and end deals where car manufacturers go to other countries. I'm gonna have them built right here." For the moment, though, the "how" is beside the point. What counts is that he's hijacked the party's base out from under the noses of its bosses, taken it clean away from Jeb Bush and Karl Rove and stashed it in a place they'll never find it. If nothing else comes of his remarkable run, he'll have done everyone a favour, showing the angry right that the Republican Party is run by, for and about the very rich.

To this point, at least, it's been an asymmetrical war: Trump carpet-bombs his rivals each and every day without much in the way of artillery coming back. But sooner rather than later, the counterinsurgency will start, a coordinated effort by the party's elites to trash him and his scary ideas. "Trump's challenge is, he's got an unusual coalition – Tea Party Republicans, non-Tea Party Republicans and even some Democrats," says Nate Cohn, the standout data journalist for *The New York Times*. "What happens when he starts getting attacked

and Trump is very late to the party," says Cohn. "Most of his rivals have been at this over a year, and have those seasoned operatives locked up. And even if they're available, is he really prepared to pay them a premium now?"

THE FIRST TIME WE MET, Trump led me to understand that his run had cost him peanuts thus far. A little outlay for jet fuel and salary to staff more events, but not a dime dropped on advertising or charters. "I thought I'd have spent \$10 million on ads, when so far I've spent zero," he says. "I'm on TV so much, it'd be stupid to advertise. Besides, the shows are more effective than ads." But with a commanding national lead at the end of August and runaway margins in the early primary states of New Hampshire and South Carolina, he's had to staff up aggressively on the fly. To that end, he's dispatched his campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, to speed-hire ground troops across the country, pros who'll try to turn his rock-star crowds into follow-through voters in six months. He's brought on Chuck Laudner, an old hand in Iowa politics, to run his operation in that state, and had ramped up months ago in South Carolina and New Hampshire, putting strong, seasoned crews to work.

Super PACs of his rivals – and quietly make his terms with them? If so, what becomes of the clenched-fist crowds he's been drawing in record numbers at every stop? Here is the bind Trump finds himself in as he buckles down to a long and arduous run. He has carved his mark as the exception to every rule: the teller of dark truths; the man too rich to bribe. Any deviation, any hint of half-stepping, will cost him far more than it would, say, Bush or Ted Cruz. Why? Because Trump's central claim is *he's not them*. The day his backers doubt that is the day he starts unravelling. They've been burned too many times to grant second chances.

AFTER THE HAMPTON RALLY, Trump is so exultant he practically floats the 15 kilometres back to his plane.

On the tarmac, he hands out \$100 bills to the drivers of his motorcade, and profusely shakes the hands of his advance-team members, some of whom, he says, will return to the school to collect names and cellphone numbers of folks still there. "You'd be amazed," Trump tells me. "These people get so excited that they stick around for hours afterward."

He parks himself at the dining table in the centre of the big plane's cabin, turns on the massive flat-panel unit that is preset to Fox News and watches reports of the speech he's just given, while wolfing down a takeout dinner. Onscreen, it is wall-to-wall coverage of Trump, though none of it is mediated by Megyn Kelly, the network's golden girl and homegrown star. A week after the Republican debate, in which she'd taken on Trump and tried to gore him over his caddish remarks about women, she'd gone missing from the conversation, vanishing to her beach house till late August. In the sweet but too-brief battle between Trump and the network that followed his ugly dust-up with Kelly, Trump had emerged from it the walk-off winner after staring down Roger Ailes, the Fox News chief. During his four-day boycott of the station, he pumped up the ratings of its rival networks by appearing on their shows and savaging Fox, and escalated his all-out war on Kelly with the crack about her bloody "wherever". Ultimately, peace broke out, and Ailes brought him back on. Trump's return, on Sean Hannity's show, drove ratings back up, beating out the competition several times over. It devolved into a victory lap for Trump, but even in triumph, he couldn't keep the truce. In his office, Trump slipped me a printout of a story titled "How Roger

Ailes Picked Trump, and Fox News' Audience, Over Megyn Kelly". "I don't start these fights, but I sure as hell win them," he told me.

And that is Trump all over: He can't-stop-won't-stop whaling away at anyone who dares to bait him. The day after Kelly returned from exile, Trump trashed her afresh with snarks and retweets, refusing to give Kelly peace. This is the other thing he learned from his father, who taught his sons to "*attack, attack, attack*", says Blair, the biographer. "He's constantly on offence, picking massive fights, and it always results in polling spikes," says Matt Boyle, a correspondent for Breitbart News, the only other writer on Trump's plane. Riding the campaign trail since the middle of last year with Ben Carson, Cruz and others, Boyle marvelled at Trump's skill for



THE HEIRS

Ivanka, Eric (centre) and Don Jr. "We are probably the only sons of billionaires who can operate a D-10 Caterpillar," says Don.

fomenting fights, which kept him atop the news cycle every day. "And Fox, John McCain, they always respond to him", which brings the media back a second day and sucks up all the inches on Page One. How do Bush et al. fight back against a puncher whose arms never seem to get tired? "They haven't figured it out yet, and they're blowing up in front of us," says Boyle. "This guy here, he's just at a different level."

With his blue tie loosened and slung over his shoulder, Trump sits back to digest his meal and provide a running by-play to the news. Onscreen, they've cut away to a spot with Scott Walker, the creaky-robot governor of Wisconsin. Praised by the anchor for his "slow but steady" style, Walker is about to respond when Trump chimes in, "Yeah, he's slow, all right! That's what we got already: *slowwww*." His staffers at the conference table howl and hoot; their man, though, is just getting warm. When the anchor throws to Carly Fiorina for her reaction to Trump's momentum, Trump's expression sours in

schoolboy disgust as the camera bores in on Fiorina. "Look at that face!" he cries. "Would anyone *vote* for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next *president*!?" The laughter grows halting and faint behind him. "I mean, she's a woman, and I'm not s'posedta say bad things, but really, folks, come on. Are we *serious*?"

And there, in a nutshell, is Trump's blessing and his curse: He can't seem to quit while he's ahead. The instincts that carried him out to a lead and have kept him far above the captious field are the same ones that landed him in ugly stews with ex-wives, business partners, networks, supermodels and many, many other famous women. At 69, he can still carry on like the teen who was yanked out of prep school and delivered to Col. Dobias, the take-no-shit instructor at the military academy. After I met Ivanka and praised her to her father, he said, "Yeah, she's really something, and what a beauty, that one. If I weren't happily married and, ya know, her *father*..."

He'd made essentially the same crack nine years ago on a talk show while promoting Season Three of *The Apprentice* – but now he's running for president, not an Emmy. "Does the guy have the wisdom to grow his base, what Kennedy called 'greatness and fitness'?" says Schmidt, the GOP strategist. "Can his range and tone expand to

meet that criteria?" Maybe what Trump needs is another Dobias, someone to tell him enough is enough and to get back on his game already. But if he had a *consigliere*, how likely is it that he would even listen? He's gotten this far largely taking only his own instruction, acting on his gut and nose for blood. Attack, attack, attack, said his old man at the wheel, driving around Brooklyn on summer Sundays to spring surprise inspections on lazy supers. Trump paid attention and learned another lesson beside it: Take plenty of muscle with you when you go.

Meantime, you can say this for the man: He keeps a campaign promise, at least through dessert. After dinner on the plane, Trump gets up to stretch his legs, wandering to the galley for something sweet. He rummages through the cupboard, where his beloved Oreos live. Trump grabs the pack of cookies, eyes them fondly a moment, then replaces them on the shelf, uneaten. Returning to his seat with a couple of Vienna Fingers (made by Keebler, not treasonous Nabisco), he catches me looking at them and grunts. "I meant what I said: No more Oreos for Trump! And you can quote me on that if you want."



Ryan Murphy's latest schlockfest, *Scream Queens*

Season of the Scream

Slasher spoofs, the 'Evil Dead' reborn, Don Johnson's return to prime time, and a double dose of Rob Lowe. By Rob Sheffield

Scream Queens

WED., 9 P.M., CHANNEL 11

Let's call it right now: *Scream Queens* is already looking like the smartest move Ryan Murphy's ever made – it has all the best elements of *Glee* and *American Horror Story*, but it tops them both. The sorority sisters of Kappa Kappa Tau have a big problem: a mysterious killer in a red devil cos-

tume, who's only slightly more evil than the sorority sisters themselves. *Scream Queens* turns this setting into an anthology series – a murder or three per week – that goes for laughs, like a demented mix of *Scream* and *Gossip Girl*. Emma Roberts is the most horrible Kappa of them all, queen bee Chanel Oberlin, sneering lines like, "That girl was a bitch who thought she was all that because her fam-

ily founded the Olive Garden and she had no gag reflex!" But there's scarcely a single non-horrible character here, which is exactly what you want when everybody's fair game to get killed next.

Scream Queens is loaded with evil pranks (somebody spiked the spray-tan tank with hydrochloric acid!) and sick jokes (a pledge reacts to the prospect of her imminent destruction by hysterically sing-

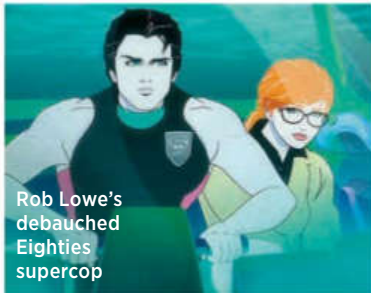
ing "Shake It Off") and nasty banter: "We're having a side-boob mixer and a white party, where everyone is encouraged to wear-slash-be white." It's also full of hilarious casting coups: Ariana Grande, Nick Jonas, Tavi Gevinson, Lea Michele in a neck brace. And as the hardass college dean who wants to take this sorority down, none other than the OG scream queen herself, Jamie Lee Curtis.

STEVE DIETL/FOX

Moonbeam City

DATE AND TIME TBC
COMEDY CHANNEL

Dazzle Novak is the ultimate Eighties supercop in this fantastic animated romp, set in a neon-and-pastel Hair Decade where everything looks like a Duran Duran album cover. It's *Miami Vice* times *Archer* with a side of *Scarface*. And



Rob Lowe's debauched Eighties supercop

the voice of Dazzle: Rob Lowe, proving that last year's McConaugh-ssaince has nothing on this year's Lowe-splision. When he isn't busting perps at a shopping-mall arcade or making yayo-fuelled love to exotic wind-chime artists, Dazzle torments his foxy supervisor Pizazz, a.k.a. Elizabeth Banks, who threatens to bust him so fast it'll make his head spin. Dazzle's riposte: "My head doesn't know the meaning of the word spin."

Ash vs Evil Dead

STAN

Damn right, the evil dead: It's like they never left. More than two decades after his classic *Evil Dead* flicks, Sam Raimi brings the franchise to TV, and despite sky-high fan expectations, he does the legacy proud. Bruce Campbell makes his long-overdue return as Ash,



Campbell gets groovy all over again in *Evil Dead*.

the chain-saw-toting low-life antihero with the wooden hand and the badass one-liners ("I got news for you, pal. You ain't leading but two things right now: Jack and shit. And Jack left town!"). Ash has spent the past 30 years trying to hide from the Dead-ite demons, getting wasted in his trailer to Deep Purple, while working as a stockboy. Once again, those occult words from the Book of the Dead get read aloud and wake up something dark in the woods. And once again, the only hope to save the human race from the undead is Ash. From his new sidekicks (welcome, Lucy Lawless!) to the gory fight scenes ("My heart's jackhammer-

ing like a quarterback on prom night!"), *Ash vs Evil Dead* proves that we need Ash now more than ever. As the man himself would say: Groovy!

The Player

CHANNEL 7

Free at last: Wesley Snipes, back on top of the game. In his long-awaited comeback thriller, Snipes isn't just any old Las Vegas casino pit boss – he presides over a secret high-stakes game where the super-rich bet on crime. And he recruits Alex Kane (Philip Winchester, the pinup cop from *Strike Back*) to be the player who has to stop these crimes from happening. From the producers of *The Blacklist*, *The Player* has the same witty mock-formal vibe – giving Snipes the full Spad-er treatment. He's all debonair evil, constantly adjusting his tie and smiling at how cunningly he's screwed over everybody else.



The girl with too many tattoos

Blindspot

CHANNEL 7

A duffel bag has just been found abandoned in Times Square. Inside: a naked woman whose memory has been erased, but who is inked head to toe in mysterious tattoo runes, including the name of a top FBI agent, who swiftly decides that national security depends on the two of them teaming up to crack the tattoo code. *Thor*'s Jaimie Alexander is likably vulnerable and earnest as Jane Doe, straining to figure out her past despite her amnesia. Yet the FBI agents are a dull bunch by comparison, especially main man Sullivan Stapleton. *Blindspot* can only improve when the ink-happy supervillains show up.

Blood & Oil

CHANNEL TBC

Don Johnson never fades away – and who would ever want him to? He's a North Dakota oil tycoon in this clever old-school soap – a salty wildcatter

who still walks and talks like a cowboy, especially when he's kicking the ass of his spoiled brat of a son. Enter Chace Crawford (*Gossip Girl*) as the up-and-coming outsider who wants to overtake Johnson's empire. Despite its Eighties heart, the show is fast-paced and smart in its frontier mud-and-boots boomtown vibe – a lot like *Blue Bloods*, except with Sonny Crockett instead of Magnum. Secret weapon: Amber Valletta, the *House of Style* model who was underused on *Revenge*, chewing up the scenery as Johnson's backstabbing supervixen of a wife.

The Grinder

DATE AND TIME TBC, FOX 8

Sometimes even Rob Lowe must face an existential crisis. In *The Grinder*, he plays the egomaniac pretty-boy star of a hit TV procedural about a slick lawyer, barking his catchphrases: "The Grinder never settles!" (As Lowe explains, "Season Four, Episode Nine, 'Settle to the Metal.'") But after his show gets axed, he drifts back to his family in Idaho, sighing, [Cont. on 70]

Ridley Scott's New Opus

Producer returns to his science-fiction roots with 'The Man in the High Castle'

AFTER 30 YEARS, RIDLEY Scott is returning to his *Blade Runner* roots – by revisiting cult novelist Philip K. Dick for the new Amazon series *The Man in the High Castle*. Based on Dick's 1962 sci-fi novel, the 10-episode show imagines an alternate history in which the Nazis win World War II and rule the U.S. (The East Coast is now known as the Greater Nazi Reich; the West Coast is the Japanese Pacific States; and the American flag has a white swastika against its blue background.) The show unfolds as a riveting alternate-universe thriller. Underground resistance fighters plot to bring down the regime as the fascist government engages in political power plays, while a contraband film sought by both sides suggests that some mysterious behind-the-scenes character is

pulling the strings. After struggling for years to adapt the series for the BBC, Scott teamed with veteran *X-Files* showrunner Frank Spotnitz to finally bring the book to life (all episodes debut November 20th). "In TV, 99 per cent of the time, good triumphs over evil," Spotnitz says. "But in this world, you're reminded that history doesn't always work out the way it should – it's mind-bending stuff."

For Scott and Spotnitz, the hope is that, in expanding on and exploring *The Man in the High Castle*'s parallel universe, they'll force audiences to question their own values and moral parameters – a sort of what-if parlour game. So far, audiences have been playing along; the show's trial-run episode became Amazon's most-watched pilot to date when it debuted this past January.

"What's most unnerving about the show is that you see how this world works and you think, 'Well, it's not *that* bad,'" Spotnitz says, chuckling. "Then you see a shot of Times Square filled with Nazi signage and you go, 'Oh, right!' When I first saw that American flag with a swastika on it, the image pushed a primal button in me. History and national identity are very personal things – to see those symbols defaced is incredibly unsettling."

DAVID FEAR



TV PREVIEW

[Cont. from 69] "Right now, I'm just driving on the highway of What the Hell Is My Life, looking for an offramp." He finds it by invading the small-town law practice of his awkward little bro Fred Savage, and turning his mastery of TV-courtroom clichés ("I'll allow it" jokes galore!) into the pursuit of justice. Lowe has a blast as the same smarmy asshole he's played so brilliantly from *Wayne's World* to *Parks and Rec*. And watching Lowe torment Savage is the kind of stunt casting that pays off.

Minority Report

CHANNEL 10

Welcome to the future, circa 2065: Teenagers have selfie drones, karaoke is still hap-

pening and genetic engineering has turned french fries into health food. And the precognitives who used to see crimes before they happen – they've been erased from the public record. But that doesn't stop them from seeing things. *Minority Report* picks up where the movie left off – 10 years later, the PreCrime Unit has been abolished. Three sibling precogs have been hidden away from the rest of society, but while the sister disapproves, one brother can't resist sneaking back in, lurking around Washington, D.C., with a notebook of drawings of the murders he sees in the future. He finds a po-

licewoman, Meagan Good, and together they form an unlikely crime-fighting team. Tom Cruise doesn't show up – but Wilmer Valderrama surprisingly fits right in as one of the cops. Welcome back to prime time, Fez.

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend

DATE AND TIME TBC

Give this one full points for audacity, as Rachel Bloom tries to revive the musical sitcom, boldly going where *Glee* and *Smash* and even *Viva Laughlin* didn't dare. Bloom's Rebecca is a New York City lawyer with a booming career but a not-too-steady grip on real-

ity – she makes the show's title seem like an understatement. Still carrying a torch for the random boy who dumped her at summer camp years ago, she finally goes off the deep end, quits her job and moves across the country to stalk him. Next thing she knows, Rebecca's wandering the strip malls of a nowhere town called West Covina, California, just two hours from the beach ("four in traffic!"). And of course, she sings show tunes about her new life: "In my soul I feel a fire/'Cause I'm heading for the pride of the Inland Empire." The musical numbers are witty ("People eat at Chez Applebee/And the sky seems to smile at me"), but it's Bloom who deserves the credit for making it all work – her psycho songbird seems charming, rather than just code-red frightening.



FROM TOP: LIANE HENTSCHER; EDDY CHEN/THE CW



Batiste brings his second-line style to late night.

Jon Batiste on 'The Late Show'

The New Orleans musician is teaming with Stephen Colbert to create a TV dance party

IT'S A WARM EVENING IN June, and Jon Batiste is bringing a little bit of New Orleans to New York. The 28-year-old musician-composer and his band, Stay Human, are playing the final night of a residency at New York's posh NoMad Hotel. Suddenly, Batiste hoists his melodica and leads the musicians (and the audience) out onto the streets – parading down Broadway second-line style past surprised bystanders and into a restaurant, where the horn section ends up jamming on the scaffolding above the entrance. “If a moment leads you to do something,” Batiste says with a smile, “don’t fight the feeling.”

As of September, Batiste is trying out that philosophy on national TV as musical director and bandleader on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*. “His music makes the audience feel so good, we may have to install a ‘Do Not

Make Love’ sign,” Colbert joked when he announced the hire. Colbert and Batiste met last year when Batiste and Stay Human played *The Colbert Report*. They got together again this autumn for a meeting in Colbert’s office in which the comedian impressed Batiste with his vision of comedy. “He’s all about people having a voice,” says Batiste. “That fit the whole concept of what we do. We’re there to light a fire on set.”

Batiste calls his joyful sound “social music”. The product of a New Orleans jazz family that goes back generations, he studied at Juilliard and formed Stay Human with classmates. They soon began performing guerrilla shows dubbed “love riots”. “In Istanbul, we had 500 people in the street,” he says. “They were singing, ‘I feel good, I feel free, I feel fine just being me’, and they weren’t English speakers.”

On *Colbert*, Batiste hopes to tear down the walls between the audience, the band and the host, and he even had a hand in designing the show’s stage set in order to make that happen. “Social music is about breaking down borders and bringing people together,” he says, “and it’s going to be exciting to get to do it every night.”

CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Colbert

Recipe for ‘Supergirl’ Success

FOX 8’s *Supergirl* is the first female superhero show of the 21st century – so showrunner Greg Berlanti (*The Flash*) has to make it fly. “I hear it more and more,” says Berlanti, “how desperate and excited people are to have a female hero.” Here are his five secrets for helping *Supergirl* take off:

Stay gender-neutral. “It’s an action show that happens to have a female lead. We paid no attention to gender in terms of proportion of action to drama to romance.”

Push limits with special effects. *Supergirl* has CGI effects that would’ve been unimaginable on TV a decade ago. “On the board in the writers’ room, it says, ‘Heart, humour, spectacle.’ We try and treat these shows like movies.”

Cast the right person. *Glee*’s Melissa Benoist is an unexpectedly amusing presence as Supergirl – think Annie Hall in a cape. “When I saw her audition, I just found myself giggling uncontrollably. You always believe what she’s doing. The original Donner *Superman* film was a touchstone – you could have a charming hero without meaning the show felt soft.”

Don’t be afraid to borrow. In her civilian identity, Kara Danvers, Supergirl works for a media magnate who bears a distinct resemblance to Meryl Streep in *The Devil Wears Prada*. “Homages help ground these worlds because people are familiar with the elements.”

Keep Superman offscreen. “Thank God for a show like *Veep*. You start like, ‘Where’s the president?’ And then finally realise you’re more interested in her story.”

BRIAN HIATT



Benoist goes up, up and away.

The Smartest Man on TV

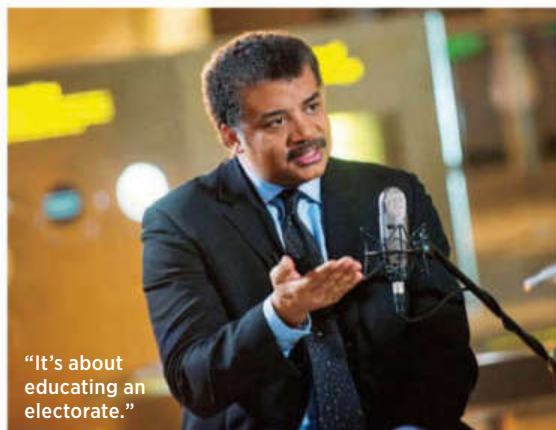
How Neil deGrasse Tyson is using his chat show to try to change the world

ONLY NEIL DEGRASSE Tyson could possibly pull off TV's riskiest gamble: hosting a science talk show. Tyson – an astrophysicist, author and host of last year's reboot of Carl Sagan's iconic series, *Cosmos: A Space-time Odyssey* – debuted *StarTalk* in April on the National Geographic Channel and quickly saw it become an Emmy-nominated success. Developed from Tyson's long-running podcast series of the same name, the show is a surprisingly entertaining mixture of pop culture and intergalactic nerdery. (A sampling of guests includes Seth MacFarlane analysing Stewie's time machine on *Family Guy*, David Byrne reminiscing about his inspiring high school math teacher, and David Crosby geeking out over sci-fi novels.) Now, for the show's second season – set to air in January – Tyson may stretch the limits of the conventional talk-show platform even fur-

ther: by influencing national policy to save the planet. "One of the carrots of *StarTalk* is you're tuning in because the guests are people in pop culture," Tyson says. "But it's about educating an elector-

Tyson a regular target of the right – critics have dubbed him a "smarter than thou" faux geek mostly beloved by "white liberal nerds". (Last Christmas Day, Tyson's tweet celebrating the birth of Isaac Newton – not Christ – provoked outrage.) But Tyson isn't always predictable. He's defended the potential of GMO food and puzzles over Obama's commitment to putting men on Mars by the mid-2030s. "He'll be on a beach in Hawaii by then," Tyson says with a laugh. He wishes NASA's funding ("a trifling pittance") was equivalent to farm subsidies ("They don't take us into the future or invent new technologies"). But what keeps him up at night is the possible decline in mankind's curiosity – which *StarTalk* aims to prevent. "My biggest concern is that the leading nations will cease to explore and civilisation will stagnate," he says. "I want our species not just to survive but thrive – if you stop doing that, you might as well go back into the cave."

DAVID BROWNE



"It's about educating an electorate."

ate so that you'll never choose a candidate who's in denial of objectively established scientific truths."

Comments like those, clearly aimed at climate-change deniers, have made

Patrick Stewart Goes on an Epic Bender

Captain Picard on his first time doing blow and having onscreen sex

After decades of weighty roles, Patrick Stewart, 75, is finally loosening up – by playing boozing, coke-snorting anchorman Walter Blunt on the sitcom *Blunt Talk*. "I used to be a really, really pompous dick," Stewart says. "But I've changed – now if it ain't fun, I won't show up."

I read that you once angrily lit into your fellow

Star Trek actors for goofing off, telling all of them...

"We're not here to have fun?" That was my line. I yelled it at Denise Crosby. What an asshole I was. But now I'm here to have fun more than anything else.

Did the Star Trek cast help you loosen up?

They were solely responsible. If I'm funny in any way at all, they made me funny. We made a pledge to one another: Each of us would be responsible for one big belly laugh a day. So you got up

to nine laughs – not bad for a day of work.

And now you're getting whipped onscreen while semi-naked for Blunt Talk.

It's actually not an unpleasant experience. It hit all the poisonous alcoholic chemicals out of my body. I've done a lot of things on this show that I'd never done before.

Like what?

I'd never done a post-coital bedroom scene before, and I got to do it with Elisabeth Shue. How wonderful is that? I'd never been chased by an irate husband through the canals of Venice, California. I'd never, never done a line of cocaine in my life. [Co-star] Adrian Scarborough and I had

to have someone come on the set and show us how to do it. I won't name names.

How has the news changed since you grew up?

When I was 12 years old, radio newsreaders wore tuxedos to read the news. That's how formal it was. Same with early television.

How would Star Trek's Captain Picard fare in an interview with Walter Blunt?

Picard would be extremely disturbed by Walter's behaviour. He would find it chaotic, harmful, damaging and unhealthy. But if he was ever a guest on *Blunt Talk*, he would walk away thinking, "That was one of the best interviews I've ever had."

KORY GROW



"I used to be a pompous dick."

"For the first time, we're in actual reality with the characters," says the show's creator.



The Muppets Grow Up and Get Dark

Kermit and the gang deal with sex, divorce and Snapchat in a faux-documentary series

IT'S A BALMY AUGUST MORNING in the offices of *Up Late With Miss Piggy*. The usual squad of flunkies, including Gonzo, Pepe the King Prawn and Scooter, surrounds Kermit the Frog, the showrunner. Fozzie Bear is off somewhere, possibly violating the office's "no Snapchat at work" policy. Piggy is the talent, so she doesn't arrive until much later in the day. There's a discussion of new guests, and Yolanda, a kindly rat, has a suggestion.

"Hey, let's call Josh Groban next. He's single, he has a great voice and he gives me the feels."

Pepe the King Prawn nods his head energetically and speaks in a vaguely Spanish accent. "Oh, he gives me the feels, too."

The rest of the room titters. Pepe doesn't back down. "What? He's a handsome man, and gender is fluid."



But Pepe stumbles over the last line. "I blew it. I apologise."

Kermit, per usual, is understanding. "That's OK."

Pepe can't resist. "I blew him."

Kermit's face puckers.

Under the table, about a half-dozen humans with their hands up the Muppets' asses break into giggles. Someone shouts, "OK, let's go again."

I hope you're in your safe place.

You know all those childhood memories of Piggy talking to Peter Sellers on the variety show, the Muppets taking Manhattan and Kermit DJ'ing your bat mitzvah? Lies. They were all just picking up a paycheck. It was not real.

Take a minute.

But this time, it counts. The Muppets are back on TV for a faux-documentary sitcom, and things are getting dark. Kermit is running a talk show with his ex and has hired all his ne'er-do-well friends. Backstage, they're being filmed by the documentarian who shot *The Office* mockumentary style.

"The movies and the original *Muppet Show*, those were

jobs the Muppets took," says Bill Prady, the show's creator, who also runs a little something called *The Big Bang Theory*. "For the first time, we're in actual reality with the characters."

Reality is angsty. Kermit and Piggy have split. Gonzo doesn't know his father. Fozzie is a hack writer whose girlfriend's parents won't accept their inter-species relationship and wonder aloud if he does, in fact, shit in the woods. Piggy is petrified that everyone will find out about her humble origins. It's not quite Ibsen, but it's definitely not Elmo and Mr. Noodle.

It seems a certainty that viewers will tune in to *The Muppets* initially for both the novelty and nostalgia factor. But will they stick around?

Prady shares the key to the show's success. "I always used to imagine that there was a bar across the street from *The Muppet Show*," he says. "And after they did the show, they would go across the street, and Fozzie would come up to Kermit and say, 'You know, it wasn't our worst show.' And they would be real. The show works if it fulfills that wish." **STEPHEN RODRICK**

"The TV show and movies were just jobs they took."

Terrence Howard's Dangerous Mind

He's the leading man on one of TV's biggest new shows, but trouble and turmoil have chased him his entire life. The 'Empire' star opens up
By Erik Hedegaard

TERRENCE HOWARD IS STANDING IN FRONT of a mirror inside his extra-deluxe, penthouse-level Chicago apartment, looking at himself looking back. You could say he sees himself as he is today, dressed in a silky long-sleeve loungewear top with a scarf circling his neck, like right out of the Hollywood handbook for dapper flamboyants. Or as what he has most recently become, a television-land megastar, for how convincingly he plays super-badass hip-hop-record mogul Licious Lyon on *Empire*, this year's most unexpected hit show. Or even as certain others see him, including some ex-wives, as a man given to outbursts of stunning violence and domestic abuse, allegations of which are, in part, what led him to take the *Empire* role in the first place. "Since they see me as a bad guy," he says his thinking went, "I'm gonna play a bad guy." ¶ So, he's got any number of ways he can look at himself. And the mirror continues to reflect, as does Howard. ¶ "Today, for me, has been about searching out who I am," he says. "We've got all these different faces that want to come out – there's at least four just in this moment, with a possible expansion to 432 – but which one do you let out? Is it the person who's cool that you've mastered? Is it the excited little boy?" ¶ For the moment,

he's leaning toward the youngster. In his head, he's now six years old, standing in front of a different mirror, in Cleveland, in the ghetto, just a little light-skinned black kid with his daddy, Tyrone, right next to him. His daddy who three years ago spent 11 months in prison for stabbing a man to death while waiting in line to see a department-store Santa. Everyone had children there. Little Terrence's coat was splattered with blood. But now his daddy was here and saying to him, "You see that curly motherfucker right there? That little redheaded motherfucker right there? You love him, because the only person that's gonna be there no matter what happens in your life is that little motherfucker."

Howard has never forgotten those words, and they've helped him through some pretty desperate moments. At one time, he was going to be a big movie star, having built his reputation on films like *Crash* (2005) and *Hustle & Flow* (2005) and his bank account with movies like *Iron Man* (2008), for which he was paid \$3.5 million, more than any other mem-



HUSTLE AND FLOW

"I'm suffering. My cheques are being garnished. There's nothing worse than a broke movie star."

ber of the cast, including star Robert Downey Jr. But word started to leak out about Howard being difficult on set; as well, women began speaking up about his temper. He soon found himself reduced to \$40,000 a movie. "When all that stuff went down about me, you're not in any bargaining position," he says. "You're shunned. You're persona non grata."

In response, the formerly redheaded little motherfucker did what he had to do. He continued to love himself by buying scissors, wire, magnets and vast num-

bers of sheets of plastic. He had a theory. It might seem crazy, it may even be crazy, but a long time ago he'd gotten hold of this notion that one times one doesn't equal one, but two. He began writing down his logic, in a language of his own devising that he calls Terryology. He wrote forward and backward, with both his right and left hands, sometimes using symbols he made up that look foreign, if not alien, to keep his ideas secret until they could be patented. In 2013, he got married again, to an L.A. restaurateur named

Mira Pak, and the two would spend up to 17 hours a day cutting shapes out of the plastic and joining them together into various objects meant to demonstrate not only his one-times-one theory but many others as well.

Howard backs away from the mirror, returns to the living room. The place is filled with his fantastical plastic assemblages. They bear a similarity to building blocks but the shapes are infinitely more complex, in two dimensions and three, tied together by copper wire or held in place by magnets. There are hemispheres, cubes, tetrahedrons and flighty wings. Some of the objects are as small as mice, others as big as fire hydrants; some are hanging, some free-standing, a few larger ones lit from the inside with LED twinkle stars. They are gorgeous and otherworldly. He has no name for them. They just are. He loves them just as much as he loves himself and his infant son, Kirin, who is sleeping nearby and will one day inherit U.S. patent 20150079872 A1 ("Systems and methods for enhanced building-block applications"), among others.

He says he quit smoking cigarettes. Taking a seat not far from Kirin, he says, "Anything you do against yourself is an attack against the people you care about." (Later on, he will admit to "sneaking a cigarette here and there".)

Pak is here, too, tending to the child. Howard is looking at her now and saying, "When you meet your one, it's completely balanced. I

don't have any greater authority than she does. It's the only thing that really works."

She smiles.

He smiles back. "You know, all my cheques from Fox are being held for garnishment, because of my ex. I'm broke as can be. But my wife, she did well for herself, so she's covered us. This place, she's renting it. I'm suffering. There's nothing worse than being a broke movie star."

Pak says that they're soon going to be buying a house of their own. "In Winnetka," she says.

"The suburbs," Howard says, "as soon as they free up my money." He goes on, "It's always been a hard road for me. I run into bad luck. But I run into good luck too, so it's even-steven right now." He nods at Pak: "I've got a good wife."

And so it would seem. But you never know what you're going to get with a guy like Howard. Or which one of those 432 faces he has allowed to come out and talk. Or what's behind his smile. Or his words. Even a simple word like "wife," for instance. A few weeks later, it comes out that he and Pak had separated in mid-2014, with her filing for divorce earlier this year, citing "irreconcilable differences", and a month from now, their divorce will be final. Plus, in a court document signed in March, Pak stated that she hadn't lived with Howard since August 2014. And yet here they are, looking at each other somewhat fondly, and letting no one else be any the wiser.

IT'S IN THE LIGHT CAUGHT BEHIND his emerald eyes, the graceful, manly bob and weave of his Adam's apple, and the sly, sure instinct of his lips. It's in the voice, sometimes so lazy and receding that it gets to the vanishing point and you have to lean forward. There's honey in it and maybe the sting of a bee. Melancholy. Sexy and scary. A flatterer, a con man, a robber, a womaniser. All of this, in varying degrees, from the moment he first got noticed in 1999's *The Best Man*, after having already spent nearly a decade breaking into Hollywood. Suddenly, studio execs were ringing him up to say, "You're gonna be the next Denzel!" And for the next few years it seemed possible, most especially because of how convincing he was as a weak-willed Hollywood producer in *Crash*, which won a Best Picture Oscar, and as a pimp in *Hustle & Flow*, which earned him an Oscar nomination. In brief, as an actor, he's a lulu – and not difficult at all, if you ask him.

"Well," he says, "I was difficult, but only because I would not conform. During *The Best Man*, they kept saying about this one line, 'This is a joke, so say it as a joke.' I was like, 'Y'all do what you want, but I'm not going to mutilate this moment.' And I said the line like I wanted, pausing before saying, 'Y'all know there ain't nothin' better than pussy, except some new pussy.' That seals my character, who he was. But after that, they spent the next year talking about how difficult I was. Then the movie comes out, I get all these accolades, and now the producers are like, 'Oh, you made the movie.' But now they've set it up that Terrence is difficult, and so that has followed me."

When show creator Lee Daniels first started casting *Empire*, he had Wesley Snipes in mind for Lucious. But that's before he talked to his pick to play Lucious' hot-tempered ex-con ex-wife, Cookie: Taraji P. Henson, who thought her co-star in *Hustle & Flow* was just the ticket. "They came to me, and I said, 'The only person I'll do it with is Terrence,'" says Henson. "Cookie and Lucious sometimes hate and love each other in the same scene. There's an unspoken connection that you can't fake. My boy Terrence and I have that. So I said to Lee, 'If you can make it happen with Terrence, call me back.'" The end result is a modern-day hip-hop soap opera of Shakespearean dimensions, with nods to old-school psychodramas like *Dallas*, as kingpin Lucious Lyon struggles to keep his empire together and mink-loving Cookie tries to claw her way back into the business. "Everything I do with Lucious is still me," Howard says. "I just change the vibration. Because Lucious has a very base understanding of life – kill or be killed – I keep him down at a very low frequency." It's all about money, sex, power and, of course, family. It was one of network television's top-five scripted shows in the U.S. last season, starting off its 12-episode run with 10 million viewers and finishing up with 21 million. It's the biggest hit Fox has had in nearly a decade.

As for Howard's success as Lucious, he's playing it cool. "I'm just trying to pay my bills," he says. "I'm looking forward to this show running its course. If I make a decent amount of money from it, I'll retire." He seems to be wanting a simpler life, the kind you find in Winnetka, one free of the temptations of Hollywood. "The problem with this business," he says, "you lose yourself."

Another problem Howard has is his temper. He's been escorted off a plane for unruly behaviour. He's punched out strangers in a restaurant. He's said to have knocked at least two of his women around, most recently ex-wife Michelle Ghent, who after a 2013 trip to Costa Rica with Howard was photographed with a black eye. She said Howard did it. He either denies the allegations or shades the circumstances or has outright justifications.

That time in 2001 when he was arrested for slugging his first wife (who he

married in 1989, divorced in 2003 remarried in 2005, and divorced again in 2007), which led to a guilty plea for disorderly conduct? According to the police report, he had "punched her twice with a closed fist".

About that one, he is contrite. "She was talking to me real strong, and I lost my mind and slapped her in front of the kids," he says. "Her lawyer said it was a closed fist, but even slapping her was wrong."

And what happened in Costa Rica with Ghent? "She was trying to Mace me," he says, "and you can't see anything so all you can do is try to bat somebody away, and I think that something caught her. But I wasn't trying to hit her."

And the 2005 incident in the restaurant? When Howard and a couple were waiting in line to be seated, they got into an argument that didn't end until Howard knocked the man to the ground and hit the woman.

Howard says he wasn't even in any line. He'd just gone to check out the wait time for a table. The woman accused him of cutting in front of her and one thing led to another, with him acting in self-defence. He pleaded guilty, once again, to disorderly conduct.

One of the oddest things is how the 2005 restaurant incident echoes what happened with his father, Tyrone, then a 21-year-old unemployed labourer, at that Cleveland department store in 1971. It too started off as an argument about who was next in a line. One man, who had three of his kids with him, accused Tyrone of cutting in front of them with his own three kids, including two-year-old Terrence, and his pregnant wife, Anita. It boiled over into violence, and somehow, Tyrone got hold of a nail file, stabbed the guy until he fell, then fled the scene. The crime made national news and became known as the "Santa Line Slaying".

"I was standing next to my father, watching," Howard says. "Then stuff happened so quickly – blood was on the coats, on our jackets – and then my dad's on a table and then my dad is gone to prison."

Leaning into the softness of the sofa, he continues, "My daddy taught me, 'Never take the vertebrae out of your back or the bass out of your throat. I ain't raisin' sheep. I raised men. Stay a man.' But being a man comes with a curse because it's not a society made for men to

"I spent all my time as a kid trying to fit in. But as a result of the travesties I've gone through, I have become awakened."



Ghetto Superstar

Howard in *Hustle & Flow*. He was nominated for an Oscar for his role as a Memphis pimp (1). With Mira Pak, the mother of his youngest child (2).

flourish anymore. Everything is androgynous, you know? The more successful men now are the effeminate." Which is another attitude that has gotten him heat. Not that he cares. "The people that judge you don't matter. They're not real. Everything is just frequencies."

He picks up one of his intricate plastic what-is-its and holds it to his eyes. "Like with these things," he says. "In those four years where I was shunned and walked away from everything, look at what I've created. But I was not trying to make this when I made it, I was just trying to find the four forces, so I took four planes and put them together where they fit naturally, an equilateral triangle, and it created a circle, a triangle and a square, and from there everything else was created just following my hands leading to a good place."

He steps across the room, considers some other objects – straight lines and curves in plastic, clear and coloured, bending and unbent, stitched together with copper wire, soldered in places – and returns with a roundish one.

"Since I was a child of three or four," he says, "I was always wondering, you know, why does a bubble take the shape of a ball? Why not a triangle or a square? I figured it out. If Pythagoras was here to see it, he would lose his mind. Einstein, too! Tesla!" He shakes his head at the miracle of it all, his eyes opening wide, a smile beginning to trace itself, like he's



expecting applause or an award. And all you can do is nod your head and try to follow along. He just seems so convinced that he's right. And that he is about to change the world.

"This is the last century that our children will ever have been taught that one times one is one," he says. "They won't have to grow up in ignorance. Twenty years from now, they'll know that one times one equals two. We're about to show a new truth. The true universal math. And the proof is in these pieces. I have created the pieces that make up the motion of the universe. We work on them about 17 hours a day. She cuts and puts on the crystals. I do the main work of soldering them together. They tell the truth from within."

After a while, Qirin has had enough of these goings-on and begins to cry. How-

ard lifts him out of his crib and wanders down the hallway. Pak watches them go.

She says she first met Howard in the middle of the day at an L.A. restaurant where she was having lunch with an old boss. He marched up to the table and said to the man, "I don't know if she's your wife or girlfriend, but she's absolutely stunning." She said, "That's very bold of you." He said, "Well, only a tiger can approach a tiger." Three weeks later, they were married.

"Isn't that crazy?" she says today. "And we have an amazing connection. But, I mean, he's not perfect. Doesn't do the dishes. Doesn't cook. Doesn't lift a finger. I probably leave him 30 times a month." She laughs and goes on, "He's so selfish. But, you know, he didn't have much of a childhood. It was difficult for him being picked on and bullied all the time. We don't have a normal life. In our two years together, I've only gone to restaurants with him two or three times. We've never been to the supermarket together. We've never been to the movies. I've never gotten a gift from him. Never, never."

"And then every minute that he has free, it's to do this." She gestures at some of Howard's thingamajigs, tilting her head questioningly. "I help him, cutting, drawing and putting things together. I've developed a slight form of agoraphobia lately. I never go out. I have no friends here. I feel like Rapunzel, you know, stuck in a penthouse with my baby."

Soon, Howard strolls back in, Qirin asleep in his arms. "You ask some good questions of my wife? She gonna get us in trouble?"

Ah, not too bad.

"No, not too bad. That's like a doctor with a big-ass needle saying, 'This ain't gonna hurt.'"

'MY MUM GOT pregnant with me when she was 15," he says later on. "She'd already had my older brother and was headed to the abortion clinic with my uncle, when they stopped at a red light and she was like, 'No, this would not be happening if he wasn't meant to be here.'"

And so all his life it's been like that – if not one thing, then another.

At birth, he says, his skin was so yellow that doctors at the hospital thought he had jaundice and whisked him away to a darkened room for three days. "No contact with Mum," he says. "Inside an incubator inside a dark room. The first three days of my life."

Soon after his father returned from prison, his parents divorced. The fami-

ly had gone from poor, to broke, to shattered. His mum moved to L.A., to try to make it as an actress, while his dad stayed put. Terrence split his time between the two.

In their ghetto Cleveland neighbourhood, Tyrone Howard was known as No Nation, for his mixed-race look, and Terrence was called High Yellow, for the colour of his skin. He was tormented because of it. "Let's smack him and see how long it takes him to turn red," the kids would say. Raised to turn the other cheek, he would not fight back, until an uncle saw him get a severe beat-down at the age of 13 and taught him how to box, Rocky-style. After that, he was good to go. "I was the pretty boy, so people didn't think I could defend myself, but it didn't end up being a good day for them."

He first took an interest in sex in grade school. "In the ghetto, things happen a lot quicker," he says. But by the time he was 16, he'd sworn it off, and when he fell in love with this one girl, he refused to give her what she wanted. "And then she ended up having a gangbang and called me laughing with her friends on speakerphone, and I was crying because of what had happened to my girl, not knowing that this was something she wanted. Before Mira, I always picked the wrong women."

When he was in high school, nerves in his cranium began to malfunction and paralysed the right side of his face: Bell's palsy. He says doctors gave him a 95 per cent chance of it staying frozen like that forever. His right eye wouldn't close, so he had to tape it shut at night. Determined to do something about the situation, he started applying electrical shocks to his face. He says he cut the wires off his dad's electric razor, attached one end to the fuse box in the basement and pressed the other to his skin. "I did that every day for five months and then I felt the slightest little twitch inside," he says. He recovered fully, pretty much. It was around this time he began to experiment with his handwriting: "The right side of my face behaved in a different way from the left, so I thought, 'Maybe that's also true of hands.' I was right-handed, so I started writing with my left hand and then I reversed the direction and started writing backward with both hands."

After high school, he attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, studying chemical engineering, until he got into an argument with a professor about what one times one equals. "How can it equal

one?" he said. "If one times one equals one that means that two is of no value because one times itself has no effect. One times one equals two because the square root of four is two, so what's the square root of two? Should be one, but we're told it's two, and that cannot be." This did not go over well, he says, and he soon left school. "I mean, you can't conform when you know innately that something is wrong."

By this time, he was already trying to make it as an actor. He had a job at Pan Am as a reservation agent, which allowed him to fly to L.A. for auditions on the cheap, where he could hand out a résumé that was full of sham acting distinctions. A bit part in a *Cosby Show* episode, which was cut in the editing room, led to other TV work and finally, in 1995,



King of Prime Time

Howard on the hit *Empire*. "Everything I do with Lucious is still me," Howard says. "I just change the frequency."

to a solid role in *Mr. Holland's Opus*, and, four years later, to *The Best Man*.

By and large, it's been a trip out of poverty that seems pretty outlandish, but whether it's apocryphal or just the way he explains himself to himself or all true, it's exactly how he says it happened, for better or for worse.

GRIEVANCES, HE'S GOT A few. Just the way it worked out, with him coming off the success of *Crash* and *Hustle & Flow* and a Denzel-like career waiting in the wings, he was the first hire and highest-paid actor on *Iron Man*, \$3.5 million, with an additional \$5 million waiting if a sequel got made. At this point, he'd heard the producers weren't interested in Robert Downey Jr., because of his past drug

problems. But Howard says he told them he'd take a \$1 million pay cut if they auditioned Downey and hired him. (Marvel Studios disputes Howard's version of Downey's hiring and the alleged salary cut, saying Howard played no part in getting Downey the job.) "Robert was so thankful and *dadadadada*," says Howard. Come time to make *Iron Man 2*, however, the producers went to Howard's agent, told him they were cutting Howard's part down and wanted a salary reduction. As Howard recalls it, his agent said "fuck you" and slammed down the phone. By the next day, Don Cheadle had been hired as his replacement.

"And so," he says, "I called Robby and was like, 'Look, man...' Leaving messages with his assistants, called him at least 17 times that day and 21 the next and finally left a message saying, 'Look, man, I need the help that I gave you.' Never heard from him. And guess who got the millions I was supposed to get? He got the whole franchise, so I've actually given him \$100 million, which ends up being a \$100 million loss for me from me trying to look after somebody, but, you know, to this day I would do the same thing. It's just my nature."

Then again, it's also in his nature to say things like, "I don't talk about my ex-wife because I don't talk about negative things", and later on to call out to Pak, "Hey, honey, where's the black-mail CD?"

Pak rummages around and comes up with it. Howard puts it in a laptop. It's a phone call, he says, between him and ex-wife Ghent that he secretly recorded. It starts off with her calling him "a fucking twat". She then goes on a rampage, threatening to sell tabloids some "fucking shitty tapes" of him having phone sex and dancing naked if he doesn't give her the money she says she is due and barking, "You're a fucking sociopath. Everybody should know it. I'm so sick of the shit that you've put me through."

It goes on for almost 13 endless, weird, brain-frying minutes, with Howard keeping his cool throughout, both on the recording and in the present moment. What he wants to demonstrate is that Ghent was the pit bull in their relationship, him the passive pussycat, no matter what she might say in legal documents or court. "I mean, does that sound like somebody afraid of me?" And it's true: Ghent's rage and bile are so ocean-deep you could drown in them. But she prob-

ably should have drawn the line at extortion. It's what has allowed Howard to go to court and ask that their 2012 divorce settlement – it gives Ghent a big part of his *Empire* salary – be dismissed, which in mid-August a judge will do, finding that Howard was “coerced” into the settlement. But at the moment, all he can do is glare at the laptop, leaning toward it, hissing, “You fucking bitch. Shut the fuck up! Shut the fuck up!” (Ghent’s lawyers declined comment; however, a press release following the decision called the court’s process “skewed” and said their client “is currently evaluating her legal options”.)

Afterward, Howard sets himself down on the sofa and looks like he’s gulping for air. He once said about himself, “The sooner people declare me insane, the sooner I’ll be free.” So has he ever been to a shrink?

“Back in the Nineties or something. Told me I was crazy,” he says. “No, he actually told me I had a sex addiction. I said, ‘So what do I do?’ He said, ‘Don’t have any sex.’ I was like, ‘OK, good, I getcha, I getcha.’”

On any medications?

“No. I took ayahuasca once. The only answer I got was ‘Keep following your hands.’”

Pak goes to take care of the baby. Meanwhile, all of Chicago is humming outside the penthouse-floor windows, with the river beneath flowing along. Howard snaps his fingers, stands up, turns his head.

“Anytime I’ve ever done anything wrong, it’ll sneak back up on me,” he says. “I mean, right away. So then I’m conscious when I’ve set booby traps along the way. I figure it’s just my walk. But if those things hadn’t happened, I wouldn’t have this.”

He seems to mean his son Qirin, his fantastic plastic objects and one times one equals two, the apartment mirrors he sometimes stands in front of, his *Empire* role, even his soon-to-be-ex-wife Pak.

“I spent all my time as a kid trying to fit in,” he goes on. “My uncle said to me, ‘Why are you so busy trying to fit in when you were born to stand out?’ I was 14. He said, ‘You’re a young prince, and someday ye shall grow up to be a king.’ Many years ago, Oprah said to me, ‘Your crown is waiting right there. Pick it up and put it on.’ I remember being in the womb, found comfort there, and have been aware since that moment. As a result of the travesties I’ve gone through, I have become awakened. I mean, after spending time with me, you can see a good part of my nature. I’m on my own path, and I like the pebbles of my cobblestones.” Which seems clear enough. There’s no stopping him. He’s pushing ahead, writing his future forward and backward, with both his right hand and his left, surrounded by symbols only he knows the meaning of, come what may. 



Peak TV Blues

There's just no way to keep up anymore.
By Rob Sheffield

THERE'S TOO DAMN much. Too much good stuff. Too much great stuff. Welcome to the age of Glut TV. In an August speech, FX boss John Landgraf bluntly summed up the crazy times we're living in: “peak TV in America”. He broke down the numbers – last year, there were 371 scripted series in prime time alone. “We believe 2015 will easily blow through the 400-series mark,” he said. “This is simply too much television.”

Fact: There will not be enough hours in 2015 to watch all the TV you want to watch. It's not humanly possible. If you give each of your eyeballs its own screen, then wire another one into your cerebral cortex, you'd still run out of time. All the shows you promise yourself (and your friends, and the TV that greets you every evening like the world's neediest roommate) you will catch up on, as soon as you get a chance? You are lying. The truth: You will die before you clear the DVR. Your final moments will be spent thinking, “But I promised my mum I'd check out *Outlander*!”

It's not even possible to sate your TV cravings by watching the pro-

verbial “a little of everything”. Because these days, until you have binge watched a series, you haven't seen it at all. To have an opinion about a show where you haven't savoured every minute? That would be a scandal. (Speaking of, did Olivia and Fitz ever get back together?)

Try it: Go to a party and casually tell people you saw *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* once. You liked it – hey, you might watch a second episode someday! Watch their faces. Get ready to spend the party in the Unfuckable Loser Corner. You have just entered church and spat coffee into the holy water.

Is too much top-notch TV a good problem to have? No doubt. Even a few years ago, it would have seemed insane to think anyone could ever complain about it. But that was before the deluge. As Landgraf says, “There's just too much competition, so much so that I think the good shows often get in the way of the audience finding the great ones.” Yet there's also a more fundamental problem deep in our psyche, because talking about TV is what we do. For fans who pride themselves on keeping up with *everything*, those days are over. TV remains our guiltiest pleasure, except now we're guilty of not making *enough* time for it. The question isn't what Glut TV will do to our remotes. The real dilemma is what it will do to our minds.

Albums To Help Heat Up Your Spring and Summer

Coldplay get happy, Kanye goes back to the drawing board, and more

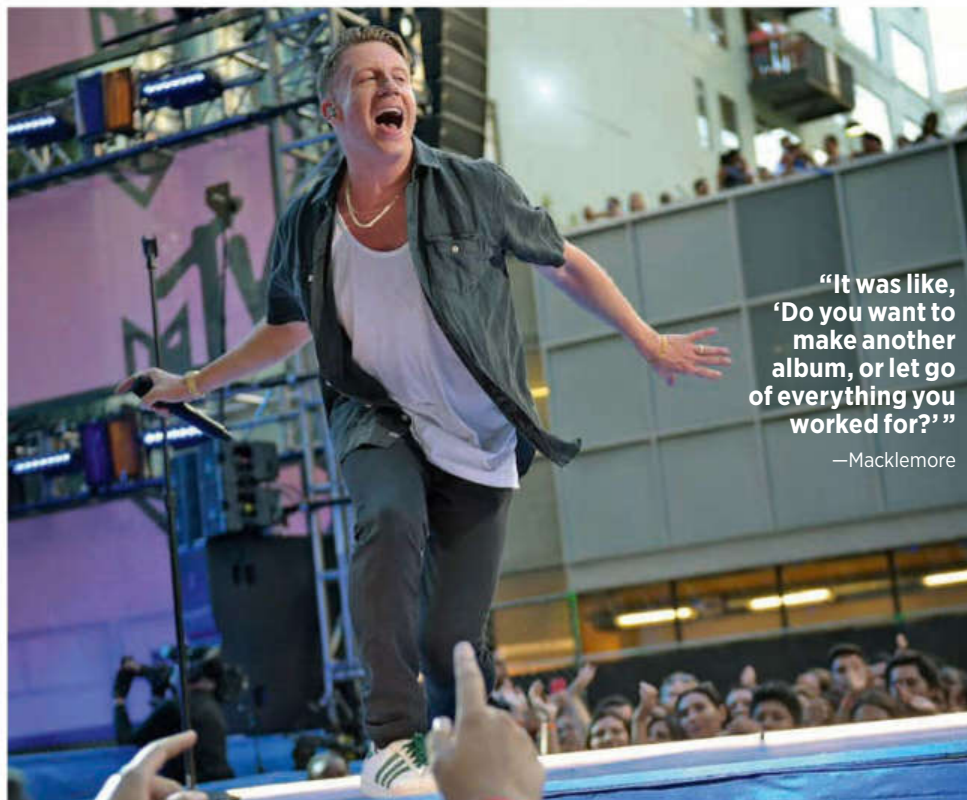
1 Macklemore & Ryan Lewis

TITLE TBD

DATE TBD

Macklemore and Ryan Lewis' follow-up to their million-selling 2012 debut, *The Heist*, ran into an unexpected delay: At the height of their success, Macklemore – who has been in recovery for drug and alcohol addiction since 2008 – backslid with weed and pills. “I went in and out of sobriety,” says the Seattle rapper. “That usually ends up in creative stagnation.” It wasn’t until October that he was able to give his full attention to making music with producer Lewis. “When I got back into my 12-step meetings, it was like, ‘This is no joke,’” Macklemore says. “‘Do you want to make another album, or let go of everything you worked for?’”

You can hear their ambition on songs like “Downtown,” an improbably epic ode to the moped Macklemore brought along on their last world tour. “It started as a clowning-around thing, but we kept making it bigger,” he says of the song, which ranges through old-school hip-hop (complete with vocals from Grandmaster Caz, Melle Mel and Kool Moe Dee), Broadway show tunes and Seventies arena rock. “That one took forever to figure out,” says Lewis. Expect some sensitive moments, too, like an emotional ballad with soul singer Leon Bridges and the already-released Ed Sheeran collaboration “Growing Up,” which Macklemore wrote for his now-two-month-old daughter. “Ryan really pushed me to get more vulnerable and come to grips with how scared I was to be a dad,” he says. “I’m



“It was like, ‘Do you want to make another album, or let go of everything you worked for?’”

—Macklemore

still trying to figure out who I am.”

2 Adele

TITLE TBD

DATE TBD

Adele’s follow-up to 2011’s 11 million-selling blockbuster, *21*, is one of the music industry’s most closely guarded secrets. Here’s what we know so far: She’s put in studio time with veteran pop songwriter Diane Warren, but she has not returned to work with Rick Rubin, who parted ways with her after producing roughly half of the songs on *21*. She has, however, reportedly recorded new tracks with past collaborators Paul Epworth (“Rolling in the Deep”) and



Adele

OneRepublic’s Ryan Tedder (“Rumour Has It”). The album may also reportedly include first-time contributions from producers and songwriters including Pharrell Williams, Danger Mouse and Blur’s Damon Albarn.

3 Kanye West

SWISH

DATE TBD

After a flurry of activity early in 2015, West has stepped back from the mid-year release that was rumoured for his seventh studio LP. So what’s up with the year’s most anticipated rap

album? He’s said he’s working “slowly, to make it an art project”. The tracks he made with Paul McCartney (including early singles “Only One” and “All Day”) and the Sia collaboration “Wolves” might not make the cut. West has also reportedly been working with Bruno Mars.

4 Grimes

TITLE TBD

OCTOBER TBD

2012’s breakthrough *Visions* made fans out of Katy Perry, Lorde and Rihanna. Now Claire Boucher – the idiosyncratic, pink-haired Canadian artist who records as Grimes – is ready to be a pop star in

her own right. Boucher, who produced her latest album herself at her new L.A. home studio, says the songs on the LP are split into three groups: “aggressive bangers” with a rock edge (see “Flesh Without Blood”, about a false friend); “weirder, more experimental things”; and “really, really poppy songs, like almost rococo pop”. She describes the album’s creation as a spiritual process. “I’m not explicitly religious, but overall I think this album is about God,” Boucher says. “I mean that abstractly. Being creative can be really elusive, and I feel like the thing that happens when it does come is maybe what God is supposed to be.”

5 Rod Stewart Another Country

OCTOBER 23RD

Stewart ended his two-decade songwriting drought with 2013’s *Time*. Now he’s on a roll, with another collection of all-new tunes that he penned himself. “I was born in London, so I’m a cockney Scotsman,” he says. “There’s a huge Gaelic feel throughout the album, lots of violins and mandolins.” On the record’s first single “Love Is”, he tries to work out the truth about romance after three divorces. “This is me passing along, to anyone who will listen, a few nuggets of wisdom acquired from my dippings into life’s chocolate box down the years,” he says. “Believe me, though, I still don’t understand the chemistry of love and why sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t.”

6 Justin Bieber Title TBD

NOVEMBER 13TH

“Where Are Ü Now”, Bieber’s hit collaboration with Diplo and Skrillex’s EDM superduo Jack Ü, has single-handedly restored the pop star’s cool after years of embarrassing press. “A lot of people lost faith in Justin Bieber,” says Skrillex. “But I always thought he was one of the best singers in the world.” Jack Ü returned to produce several



Coldplay

songs slated for possible inclusion on Bieber’s first full-length album since 2012, which may also feature reported contributions from Kanye West and Rick Rubin. “If anybody gets to see Justin in the studio, they’re going to be blown away,” Skrillex adds. “He gets on any instrument, and he’ll school you in it – then he’ll go skateboard and school you in that.”

7 Coldplay A Head Full of Dreams

DATE TBD

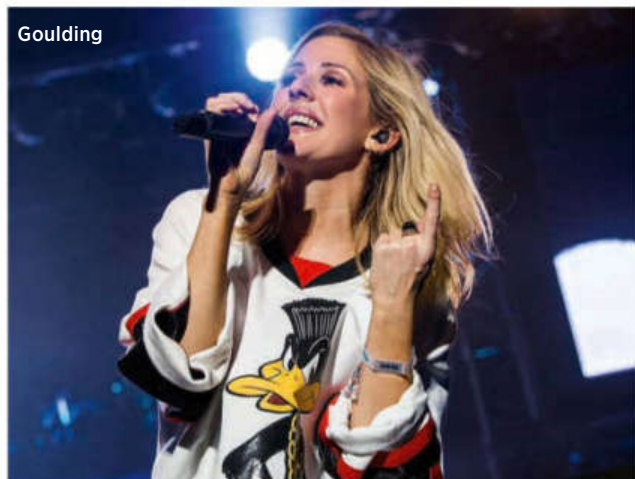
After last year’s introspective *Ghost Stories*, which reflected frontman Chris Martin’s separation from wife Gwyneth Paltrow, Martin has said Coldplay are seeking “something colourful and uplifting” for their seventh LP. “It’s hard to perfect a happy song,” he confessed recently. “Pharrell managed it. Stevie Wonder managed it. Bill Withers managed it. I haven’t managed it yet.” The band has been holed up in London with Norwegian production duo Stargate, who’ve produced hits for Rihanna, Beyoncé and Katy Perry (and Coldplay’s 2014 one-off “Miracles”). Adding to the mystery, Martin has said *A Head Full of Dreams* could be their finale. “It’s like the last *Harry Potter* book or some-

thing,” he said recently. “Not to say that there might not be another thing one day, but this is the completion of something.”

8 Ellie Goulding Delirium

NOVEMBER 6TH

Smash singles like 2011’s “Lights” and 2012’s “Anything Can Happen” have positioned Goulding as a left-field pop force. This year, she’s building on that breakthrough with an album of tunes aimed directly at the charts, featuring production from Top 40 heavyweights including Max Martin. “I want to hear my records on the radio,” Goulding says. The



Goulding

common thread through it all are her bright, airy vocals. “My voice is the one thing that no one else is going to have,” she says.

9 YG Still Krazy

DATE TBD



YG

YG’s first album, *My Krazy Life*, was one of the strongest rap LPs of 2014, and one of the best straight-up West Coast gangsta rap releases in years. Stakes for his follow-up got even higher when an unknown assailant shot the Compton rapper three times outside a Los Angeles studio where he was recording in June. Luckily, the injuries to his hip weren’t life-threatening – and within days, he was back in the vocal booth, recording a song about the incident, which remains unsolved. “When I’m outside the studio, there’s some paranoia,” YG says. “But when I’m in the studio, it just adds to my creativity. I’m going to capitalise off all that shit!” He estimates he’s about halfway done with *Still Krazy*, whose bass-heavy G-funk sound – from producers including Kendrick Lamar collaborator Terrace Martin – often makes it feel like an alternate-universe sequel to *The Chronic*. “I just want to make something that’s going to stick around for 10 or 15 years,” YG says. “Classic shit, that’s what I’m fucking with.”



1



2



4

(1) Chewbacca and Ford in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. (2) Craig is again 007 in *Spectre*. (3) DiCaprio takes aim in *The Revenant*. (4) Lawrence leads her troops in *The Hunger Games*.



3

Big-Screen Bonanzas

The next few months hold epic thrills and Academy gold By Peter Travers

Black Mass

OCTOBER 8TH

JOHNNY DEPP KICKS OFF the spring season on a high with a scary tour de force as Whitey Bulger, the Boston gangster convicted in 2013 on 11 counts of murder. "I'm very excited to slide into that skin," says Depp, 52, who also slides into the awards game after career setbacks (*The Lone Ranger*, *Transcendence*, *Mortdecai*). Depp just kills it in this one.

The Walk

OCTOBER 15TH

JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT EX-cels as an ardent, acrobatic Philippe Petit before, during and after the Frenchman took

that daredevil walk on a steel wire between the World Trade Center towers on August 7th, 1974. Better yet, director Robert Zemeckis, shooting in vertiginous 3D, puts you up there with him and oh, baby, wow.

The Martian

OCTOBER 1ST

DIRECTOR RIDLEY SCOTT told Matt Damon, who was hedging about doing *The Martian* so soon after *Interstellar*, "This is going to be fucking fun." Guess what? It is. In Scott's take on Andy Weir's bestseller, Damon is an astronaut stranded on Mars when his crew heads back to Earth thinking him dead. Don't fret about existential dread – it's a blast.

Legend

OCTOBER 15TH

"IT'S A HELL OF A CHALLENGE," says Tom Hardy. That's an understatement. In this electrifying true-crime story, Hardy plays 1960s London gangster Reggie Kray and his gay twin, Ronald. They're both total psychos, but in different ways. Hardy takes more effing risks than anyone since Daniel Day-Lewis. You can't tear your eyes away from him.

Crimson Peak

OCTOBER 15TH

WHEN GUILLERMO DEL TORO (*Pan's Labyrinth*) does a haunted-house movie, you better believe it will keep you up nights.

"It's violent and kinky," Del Toro warns. Things get Gothic fast when a dashing 19th-century aristocrat (Tom Hiddleston) takes his London bride (Mia Wasikowska) to live in his spooked mansion. For company, she has his sibling (Jessica Chastain), who redefines "twisted sister". Del Toro is a master of things that go bump in the night and fester inside.

Spectre

NOVEMBER 12TH

IS "SPECTRE" AN ORIGIN story for James Bond? Director Sam Mendes, who hit pay dirt bonding with Bond in *Skyfall*, says so. And Daniel Craig returns for the fourth time as 007, with Oscar winner

Christoph Waltz as his nemesis. Waltz practically oozes out the words "I'm the author of all your pain." How do you resist?

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2

NOVEMBER 19TH

THE END. AT LAST. STUDIO execs have squeezed four movies from three bestselling books by Suzanne Collins. You could feel the padding. But it didn't hurt that much, because *The Hunger Games* remained the class act in a long line of imitation dystopian epics (that's you, *Divergent*). And because Jennifer Lawrence gave her all to playing Katniss, the "futuristic Joan of Arc" (Lawrence's words) who finally gets to go medieval on President Snow (Donald Sutherland). Rock on.

Star Wars: The Force Awakens

DECEMBER 17TH

QUITE SIMPLY, THE MOVIE event of the year. No one knows yet how J.J. Abrams will pick up the saga that ended with *Return of the Jedi*. It's gotta be better than the three George Lucas prequels. We do know Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) is back, and Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher), and Han Solo (Harrison Ford). We know there's a new hero in Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) and a fresh villain in Kylo Ren (Adam Driver). Chewbacca sums it up best in his immortal Wookiee sound: "Arwwwwwwaaaaaaarrrrrrrra-hahahahhaahhhhaa...."

The Revenant

JANUARY 7TH

TALK IS THAT ALEJANDRO G. Iñárritu turned the filming of this revenge Western into a Canadian-wilderness version of *Survivor*. The cast, led by Leonardo DiCaprio as a 19th-century hunter left to die by his pals (Tom Hardy and Domhnall Gleeson), froze their actor pee-pees off. "What good is a happy cast," says Iñárritu, "if the film is a piece of shit?" Point taken.

OSCAR BAIT



Fassbender as Steve Jobs



Redmayne as the Danish girl



Bryan Cranston as Dalton Trumbo

Steve Jobs

Michael Fassbender may finally win an overdue Oscar, for playing the late Apple genius in Danny Boyle's film. The ballsy script, by Aaron Sorkin, tells the core story through the launches of three Apple products. No lazy biopic here – it's all go for broke. *Jan. 14th*

book Patricia Highsmith had to write under a pseudonym. At Cannes, the magnificent Blanchett and Mara won ovations. You'd be crazy to miss it. *Jan. 14th*

The Danish Girl

Eddie Redmayne, who just won an Oscar for playing Stephen Hawking in *The Theory of Everything*, could repeat. As a Danish artist who in the 1920s became the first male to make the surgical transition to female, the gifted British actor taps into the zeitgeist. Hello, Caitlyn. *Dec. 26th*

Trumbo

Can Bryan Cranston add an Oscar to his four Emmys for *Breaking Bad*? He's got a juicy role as Dalton Trumbo, a screenwriter who was blacklisted in the 1950s for his Communist politics. Trumbo wrote *Spartacus*, *Exodus* and other films using a fake name (not Heisenberg) and fought back hard. *Dec. 26th*

Carol

Picture Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara enjoying a love that dare not speak its name. That's *Carol*, a film set in the 1950s, when lesbianism was a social taboo. Todd Haynes directs from a

Joy

Jennifer Lawrence lands in the award race when she teams with director David O. Russell (*Silver Linings Playbook*, *American Hustle*). So expect good things when she plays Joy, a character loosely based on the inventor of the Miracle Mop. "It's the interior life of one woman's soul, from 10 to 40," says Russell. *Dec. 26th*



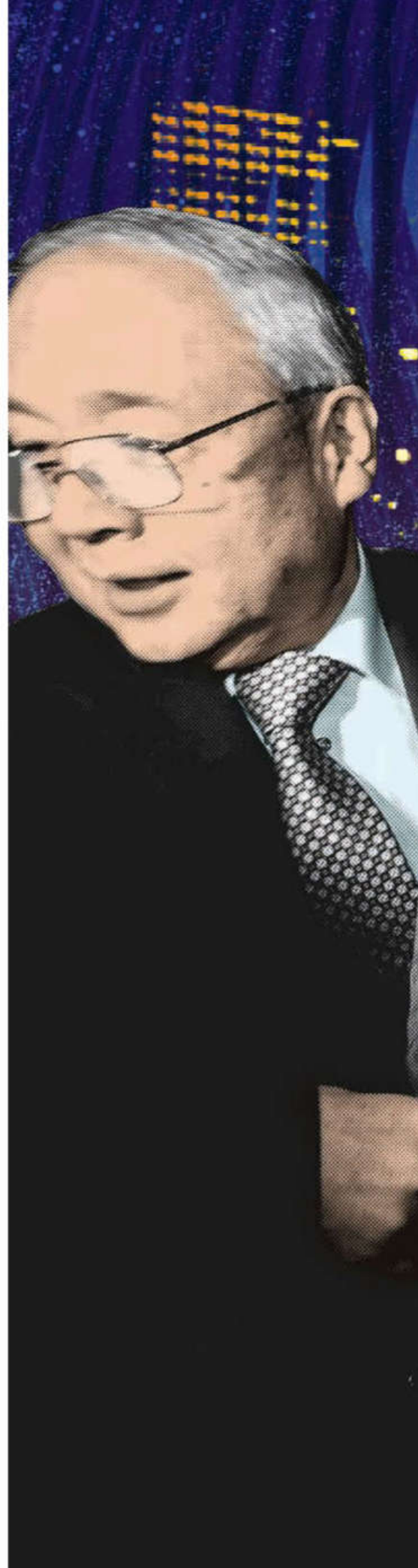
ROLLING STONE REPORTS

The Rise & Fall of a Bitcoin Kingpin

How a bullied geek forged an empire out of digital currency, and became a suspect in a half-billion-dollar heist

By David Kushner

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY CAMERON EMERSON-ELLIOTT





JUST AFTER SUNRISE ON AUGUST 1ST, TOKYO police stormed into a sleek two-storey townhouse on a quiet residential street in Japan's capital and arrested Mark Karpeles, the 30-year-old head of Mt. Gox, the largest bitcoin exchange in the world. By the time they led the doughy, pale Frenchman away, the police could barely make their way through the throngs of reporters closing in outside. ¶ Just three months earlier, when I met Karpeles here, the scene was considerably calmer. He was baking apple quiche, a recipe

passed down from his grandmother. Scruffy and chipper, his dark hair pulled back in a loose ponytail, he wore baggy green pants and a flour-dusted black T-shirt with the words **THIS ISN'T EVEN MY FINAL FORM**. System of a Down played from his radio. Apples and bread crumbs covered the living-room table he otherwise used for his model train set.

Karpeles was the accidental emperor of bitcoin, a hapless geek who, as much to his own surprise as others', became the most powerful lord of digital cash. During his reign, bitcoin, the leading form of virtual currency, rose in value from approximately 25 cents to more than \$1,200. *The Wall Street Journal* estimated that at one point Mt. Gox was processing 80 per cent of all bitcoin transactions in the world. At its peak, the company traded more than \$4 million a month. Tyler Winklevoss – one of the famed twins who sued Mark Zuckerberg over the founding of Facebook for a \$65 million settlement and is among the bullish investors in digital money – says Mt. Gox was “the most important and prominent property in bitcoin”.

But in February 2014, it was discovered that a half-billion dollars worth of bitcoins simply vanished from Karpeles' exchange, leaving customers around the world unable to withdraw their funds. It's the largest online heist in history. (Estimates vary on the exact amount. Many have reported \$450 million; Karpeles says it could be as high as \$650 million.) Some – including even those who worked closely with Karpeles – suspected it was an inside job. “We had an ongoing joke: ‘Take pizza to Mark when he's in jail,’” Ashley Barr, the first employee at Mt. Gox, tells me. “We always assumed that was where he'd end up.”

The Japanese police arrested Karpeles for allegedly padding his digital accounts with \$1 million worth of fake bitcoins and fleecing another \$8.9 million from Mt. Gox customer deposits. He's still being

investigated for what, if any, role he had in the disappearance of the half-billion in bitcoins.

Karpeles, over several months of interviews, denied culpability. “A lot of people seem to think that someone at Mt. Gox was evil,” he says. “I know that I didn't steal anything. I mean, if I had, like, \$650 million in bitcoin, or even a fraction of this, I wouldn't be here.”

KARPELES NEVER EXPECTED to be at the centre of a financial revolution. Growing up in Burgundy and Paris, the melancholic only child of a single mother (he never knew his father), Karpeles escaped

into the world on the other side of his computer screen. His mother, Anne, a science teacher and amateur coder, wrote a musical keyboard for him to play on his Sinclair computer. “I created small game programs for him, and he liked it,” his mother e-mailed me in French. “A lot.”

By 10, Karpeles had started teaching himself to code by taking apart his grandmother's alarm system. While other kids dreamed of being rock stars or athletes, Karpeles dreamed of finding fame through coding. “I wanted the software I write to be useful enough for everyone to want to use it,” he says.

At a young age, he was sent to a Catholic boarding school in the Champagne valley. But, socially awkward and geeky, he was bullied by his classmates and ostracised at school.

“It was not so easy to adapt,” he tells me one afternoon, as he browses manga in a Tokyo bookshop. Karpeles spent his days devouring Japanese comics and scribbling code in a notebook, since he didn't have access to a PC.

After finishing middle school, he put his skills into practice when he moved to Paris with his mother, and began, in his early teens, hacking into shopping sites so he could get anything he wanted for free. (When I ask how he did it, he smiles and says, “It's probably not a good idea for me to tell you.”) Karpeles savoured his newfound power. Stealing Gameboys and mobile phones for his classmates, he learned, was a way to make friends. “A lot of people respected me for that,” he recalls. “I did feel more important, in a way. If I need something, I press a button and I get it.”

Karpeles' scam ran for two years, so long that his initial fear of getting caught faded. “After a while, you see nothing happening, so you forget about it,” he says. Forget about it, that is, until the police showed up and carted the teenager off to jail. As a minor, he got away with only probation, but the experience marked the beginning of years of adolescent turmoil. To his mother's despair, he ran away and attempted to live on the streets of Paris for a week. Through his teens and early twenties, he sank into a suicidal depression; at his lowest point, he made a noose out of a computer cable (“It was the only thing I had around,” he tells me with

a shrug), though he never brought himself to use it.

In 2009, he moved to Japan, a country he'd been fascinated by since getting hooked on anime as a boy. Despite being a *gaijin*, or foreigner, he felt at home for the first time in his life, quickly learning the language and launching his own Web hosting company. He was first introduced to bitcoin when a customer in Peru told Karpeles he was having trouble getting a credit card and asked if he could pay with bitcoins instead.

Bitcoin was created in 2009 by a mysterious coder (or group of coders) under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto as a radical new payment system: decentralised, unregulated and, for the most part, anonymous. Though it has real value (with a current exchange rate of around \$250), bitcoin exists

“People think someone at Mt. Gox was evil,” says Karpeles. “I didn't steal anything. If I had \$650 million in bitcoin – or even a fraction of that – I wouldn't be here.”

This is Contributing Editor PAUL SOLOSTAROFF's first feature for RS Aus.

ILLUSTRATION BASED ON PHOTOGRAPH BY TONOHORO OHSUMI/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



VIRTUAL MOGUL

Karpeles announcing that his bitcoin-exchange company was filing for bankruptcy in 2014. This year, Japanese police arrested him for allegedly padding his accounts with fake bitcoins.

electronically. There's no paper, no coins, no bank to charge transaction fees or government to control the flow. Intrigued, Karpeles became an early adopter. He found purpose and community among bitcoin faithful such as Jed McCaleb, a young American who'd recently launched his own bitcoin exchange, Mt. Gox.

Mt. Gox was originally a site McCaleb had made for people to exchange Magic cards (thus the name - Magic: the Gathering Online Exchange, or Mt. Gox for short). But by July 2010, he'd devoted it to bitcoin, setting it up as the currency's first online brokerage: processing purchases and holding customers' money. By taking a small commission on trades, Mt. Gox was set to bring in \$100,000 its first year. But there were setbacks, like when a hacker stole \$45,000 worth of virtual currency. By March 2011, McCaleb wanted out.

According to Karpeles, McCaleb, who he'd become familiar with online, asked him if he'd want to take over Mt. Gox. All he asked for in return was a 50-50 split of the profits for the first six months, and a 12 per cent stake in the future. "I basically got it for free," Karpeles recalls. (McCaleb

declined to comment.) At the time, with only about 1,000 people using the exchange, Karpeles hardly expected to get more than ramen money. But he figured it would be "a new adventure".

IT DIDN'T TAKE long for Karpeles' new adventure to take an unexpected turn. On June 6th, 2011, just three months after he took over Mt. Gox, Sens. Chuck Schumer and Joe Manchin wrote to Attorney General Eric Holder and Drug Enforcement Agency administrator Michele Leonhart, urging them to shut down Silk Road, an online black market predominantly used for drugs. It wasn't just the site that was a concern, but the new economy making it possible. "The only method of payment for these illegal purchases is an untraceable peer-to-peer currency known as bitcoins," the senators wrote.

Hoping to stay out of the fray, Karpeles wrote to the DEA, offering to comply

with any investigation. "Ultimately, we are pursuing a goal of accepted legitimacy, both for bitcoin and our exchange," he wrote. To protect against drug dealers laundering money on the site, Mt. Gox began to track suspicious transactions, especially

anyone moving large sums. All the news about Silk Road, however, proved good for business. With growing exposure, the price of bitcoin hit a new peak of \$30. In less than two months, according to Karpeles, Mt. Gox had grown from 1,000 customers to 65,000.

But Karpeles' burgeoning empire would soon take a massive hit. On June 18th, someone claimed to have hacked into the Mt. Gox computers and was putting its files up for sale. Customers began to notice bitcoins mysteriously disappearing from their accounts. Karpeles took to Twitter and Reddit to reassure the nervous bitcoiners that, in fact, the problems affected only a handful of users. "Trust me," he wrote, "if we had a problem in Mt. Gox

and it was actively exploited, we'd have way more than a dozen compromised accounts."

Yet the next night, Karpeles awoke to an urgent call. The price of bitcoin was crashing. Around 2 a.m., he discovered a hacker was cashing out thousands of bitcoins, and thus plummeting the price from \$17 per bitcoin to less than a penny. "Someone's cashing out the motherlode on mtgox!" one person posted on the forums. Karpeles quickly moved \$7 million in bitcoins on the site to another server and temporarily shut down Mt. Gox before more damage could be done.

THESE WERE JUST THE FIRST of many warning signs Karpeles seemed to ignore. Behind the scenes, people were growing concerned over his role in the nascent bitcoin economy. Chief among them was Roger Ver, the so-called "Bitcoin Jesus" who was also living in Tokyo at the time. A wiry libertarian from Silicon Valley, Ver had renounced his U.S. citizenship after getting arrested for flipping fireworks on eBay and serving 10 months in prison. Ver, who made millions selling computer hardware online, saw bitcoin as a way to subvert the government he'd grown to despise.

"A real clear milestone is when governments no longer control money," Ver tells me one night at a Tokyo steakhouse, one of the many in town that accept bitcoins. "If the world's using bitcoin," he believes, "governments won't be able to fund wars through inflation like they do today."

Ver bought up what's now worth millions in bitcoins, and he committed himself to spreading the word – after moving to Japan, he was the first to lend a hand to Mt. Gox in the wake of the hacking attack, desperate to keep the currency viable and attractive. But he grew dismayed over what he saw as Karpeles' strange sense of remove. "He has no work ethic," says Ver, who had to deal with panicked customers during the crisis while Karpeles went home. (Karpeles says he left because he "couldn't work on the code with everyone around.")

Still, the company, and currency, survived the early hacks and continued to boom. Karpeles expanded to dozens of employees and moved to Google's former office building in Tokyo. Despite his tendency to be, as his mother puts it, "withdrawn," it seemed to some that the success was going to his head. "I had to talk him out of buying a Lamborghini," says co-worker Barr. "I always felt Mark was trying

to prove something – like, from childhood he was told he wouldn't amount to much. One time at his computer he said, 'I wish my old teachers could see me now.' He wanted to be the head of something big."

For Mt. Gox, one of the biggest breaks came from the "Winklevi". The twins had been vacationing on the Spanish island of Ibiza when they heard about bitcoin. The two had just begun spending their Facebook settlement by investing in various startups, and they were looking for the next big thing.

"Bitcoin and digital currency is just this thing that was always going to happen," Tyler Winklevoss says. The Winklevi bet big, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on bitcoin. And there was only one place to buy it in bulk, they realised: this company run by an elusive Frenchman in Tokyo, Mt. Gox. Still, the Winklevi were aware of the risks of getting involved with the exchange. "It's like, you see houses built on the side of a hill and they don't have insurance," Tyler says, "then a mudslide comes along and the houses get destroyed."



THE THEFT AND ITS FALLOUT

(1) Karpeles taught himself to code at 10, soon hacking into shopping sites and getting arrested before moving abroad. (2) Police officers carry pieces of evidence out of Karpeles' house in Tokyo on August 3. (3) A bitcoin investor at Mt. Gox, 2014



BY 2013, KARPELES FELT LIKE he was achieving his lifelong dream of reaching computers around the world. But while he was enjoying his newfound wealth, the feds suspected his hands might be getting dirty in something nefarious: running Silk Road. In April 2012, investigators were able to identify Silk Road bitcoins being laundered on Mt. Gox. And by that summer, the lead investigator, Jared Der-Yeghiayan, had zeroed in on "a good target," as he later put it: Karpeles. In an affidavit, Der-Yeghiayan stated there was "probable cause" that

the e-mail accounts of Karpeles – whom he described as “a self-proclaimed computer hacker” – would contain evidence on a conspiracy to sell drugs online and run a money-laundering business.

On May 9th, investigators filed a separate affidavit to seize \$2 million from Karpeles’ U.S. bank accounts for allegedly operating an illegal money-transfer business. By doing this, Karpeles’ U.S. business would effectively be shut down. (In a bizarre twist, the investigator who filed the affidavit was later revealed to be Shaun Bridges, one of two Silk Road investigators who broke bad while tracking the site’s elusive founder, known as Dread Pirate Roberts. Bridges, a Secret Service agent, had moved \$820,000 in stolen bitcoins on Mt. Gox, and some speculate that he ordered the seizure in an attempt to erase traces of his own misdeeds.)

With the feds squeezing Karpeles, Mizuho Bank, the firm in Japan that handled all the international transfers and withdrawals for Mt. Gox, refused to process any more withdrawals from the site. When Mt. Gox customers began complaining that it was taking longer and longer to withdraw money, Karpeles would stall and reply that there was a “backlog” of orders. Meanwhile, the feds cracked the Silk Road case. In October 2013, authorities arrested Ross Ulbricht, a 29-year-old Texan, for running Silk Road. (This past May, Ulbricht was sentenced to life in prison.)

By early 2014, concerns were mounting over Mt. Gox, which “started to look like a roach motel”, according to Tyler Winklevoss, who, along with his brother, got out unscathed. But others wouldn’t be so fortunate. On February 7th, 2014, Mt. Gox announced it was suspending all withdrawals. The decision sent bitcoin value dropping more than eight per cent and created panic online.

The crash showed the power of Mt. Gox – and just how vulnerable the currency was to the company’s troubles. “It was the only exchange,” says prominent bitcoin investor Barry Silbert, “but it was one of the worst-run businesses.” After two long weeks without any new information, customers logged on to Mt. Gox on February 24th to find the most nightmarish thing of all: a blank page. Their worst fears were

confirmed when a note appeared on the site. A “decision was taken to close all transactions for the time being”, it read.

According to Karpeles, the problem stemmed from what’s called a “transaction malleability”, a software flaw that allowed people on the outside to manipulate the bitcoin transactions and steal money from the exchange. At first, he tells me, he had no idea how much bitcoin was missing, but the deeper he dug, the worse it became: By his estimate, \$650 million in bitcoins were gone. “It really felt unreal,” he recalls late one night in a subterranean Tokyo bar. “I don’t know how to describe that. When you get a hospital operation without any anesthetic, it hurts at first, but at some point the pain reaches a point where you don’t feel anything anymore.”

High above the anime billboards and lights of Tokyo, Karpeles hid inside his apartment, terrified. Protesters had flown in from around the world to camp outside his office. Reporters loomed outside his home. He got death threats. “We need an organisation to search and torture and kill Mark Karpeles,” read one anonymous post on a bitcoin message board. “I didn’t feel safe for my life,” he tells me.

On February 28th, 2014, Karpeles filed for bankruptcy and held a press conference in Tokyo. As he stood before the cameras in his ill-fitting grey suit, his mind raced. “There were weaknesses in the system,” he stammered. “I’m truly sorry to have caused inconvenience.” He says he wanted

to say more, that he was sorry for what happened, how “devastated” he felt. But instead he just bowed awkwardly in apology. “I tried to speak,” he tells me, “but I didn’t feel any words come out.”

As Mt. Gox’s collapse made headlines, it wasn’t just the future of bitcoin cast into doubt, but Karpeles’ role in the debacle. Suspicions rose that March when the company announced it had found 200,000 bitcoins in a forgotten digital wallet – the equivalent of forgetting \$125 million in gold you left under a mattress.

“This isn’t something you could accidentally misplace,” says Jay Edelson, an attorney representing the 600,000 North American Mt. Gox customers in a class-action suit. Investigators hope to recover the missing bitcoins, a difficult task in an age when someone can hide half a billion dollars

on a thumb-drive. “Someone has hundreds of millions of dollars in bitcoin that has not been returned,” says Edelson

For the true believers of digital currency, the fall of Mt. Gox and Karpeles’ arrest mark the end of bitcoin’s Wild West. With major banks such as Goldman Sachs now investing millions in virtual currency exchanges, bullish investors are betting that bitcoin will become “the future of money,” as Cameron Winklevoss says. He, along with his brother, is set to launch a Wall Street-friendly exchange called Gemini.

In the meantime, police are still trying to find Mt. Gox’s missing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of bitcoins and determine what went wrong. Some blame incompetence. Nicolas Christin, a computer scientist at Carnegie Mellon University, examined several leaked Mt. Gox databases and found evidence of bugs, missing records and internal accounting that was “a horrible mess”. In the bankruptcy filing, Karpeles acknowledged that he had been aware of vulnerabilities since 2011, leading others to believe he had, at best, overlooked years of leaking funds.

Others insist this was an elaborate theft. In January, after a six-month investigation into Mt. Gox, the Japanese police concluded the heist was at least a “partial inside job”. Many people, including the lawyers filing the class-action suit, are pointing to Karpeles himself. “Mt. Gox was run by Mark,” says Edelson. “He had control of all the code, all the transactions, and he kept everybody out of the process. All signs point to him as the person who did this.”

Karpeles, as of this writing, is still being questioned by Japanese investigators and has not yet been charged with any crimes. He has admitted to reporters that he did create fake bitcoins, but only as “a test” for new software, not with the intent of making himself rich. He has also said he will “of course deny” any charges that may come. So what does he say really happened at Mt. Gox? When I last saw Karpeles at his townhouse in May, he told me he suspected that perhaps someone within the company was the victim of a phishing attack, which allowed an outside hacker access to the Mt. Gox database. “I don’t know if there was inside help or not,” he says. “I still believe it’s very likely someone from the outside coordinated the operation.”

Throughout my time with Karpeles, he maintained his innocence with such calm that I was left with two possible conclusions. He’s either the greatest criminal mastermind of the digital age or an over-eager chump who got in way over his head, and, perhaps, resorted to the most desperate means to get out. But whether he’s found guilty or innocent, he’s not done dreaming yet. He hopes to take the lessons he’s learned at Mt. Gox and create a more secure form of digital cash: “I still want to be on every computer in the world.”

“Someone has hundreds of millions of dollars in bitcoin that has not been returned,” says an attorney suing Mt. Gox. “All signs point to Mark as the one who did this.”

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Dallas Green's Grand Return



Fifth album from folk-rock fixture soars with a little help from key players



City and Colour

If I Should Go Before You

Dine Alone/Cooking Vinyl

★★★★

BY DAN F. STAPLETON

City and Colour has been Canadian troubadour Dallas Green's main gig for years now – so why do so many still think of it as a side project? The legacy of Green's former band, earnest post-hardcore outfit Alexisonfire, is a factor: for those of a certain age, Green will forever be associated with punk angst and packed mosh pits. But Green's limitations as a songwriter and arranger have also contributed to the perception that City and Colour's music, while compelling and occasionally exquisite, is somehow less than fully formed.

2005's *Sometimes*, Green's first release as City and Colour, was a modest collection culled from a decade's worth of bedroom songwriting. It succeeded precisely because of its limited scope: the tracks, which married Dashboard Confessional's acoustic emo with nostalgic folk, focused on teenage emotions and the burden of being a touring musician at a young age. On subsequent releases, Green attempted to flesh out his sound, self-arranging songs for a full band and incorporating blues and country motifs. The results were solid but failed to soar, and by album number four, 2013's *The Hurry and*

the Harm, Green seemed to be running out of ideas.

What a relief, then, that *If I Should Go Before You* is the strongest, most consistent set of songs City and Colour has produced. While previous albums were pieced together by an array of guest musicians, this set features just four other players: Green's current touring band. The difference is immediately apparent. These tracks unspool with ease, boasting the sort of rich aura that only materialises when five musicians who trust each other start to jam.

Nine-minute opener "Woman" is a forceful declaration of intent that combines foreboding electric guitars, cavernous drums and an eerie vocal from Green. It's easily the darkest track in the City and Colour catalogue to date, and it effectively showcases the band's ability to conjure a full-bodied atmosphere without resorting to excessive layering. "Northern Blues" features a brooding, staccato guitar line and a propulsive rhythm section, with lyrics from Green about a journeyman in search of clarity. And the title cut, a dusty ballad dominated by whammy-bar guitar, artfully establishes a melancholy vibe.

Front-loading the album with moody material makes the less serious back-end shine brighter. On "Runaway" the band channels the summery vibe of latter-day Counting Crows, pairing bouncy drums with slide guitar before luxuriating in a gorgeous half-time outro. Although Green's lighter songs sometimes sound recycled, his band props them up ("Mizzy C", for example, is the sort of track that Green could write in 10 minutes flat, but the introduction of a fat guitar riff and keys around the two-minute mark save it).

Album closer "Blood" is unexpectedly quiet. The key ingredients are a simple acoustic guitar line, low notes on an upright piano and ambient electric-guitar textures, but the effect is kaleidoscopic. It's a sad, brilliant song, expertly animated by the band – and it serves as proof that, with the right players by his side, Green can approach greatness.

KEY TRACKS: "Woman", "Lover Come Back", "Blood"



Chisel Ride the Crime Wave

What's the opposite of slowing down and smelling roses?

Cold Chisel *The Perfect Crime* Eleven ★★★★★



Urgency is key to *The Perfect Crime*. Spurred by the shock passing of drummer Steve Prestwich on one hand and the hard-hitting modus operandi of producer Kevin Shirley on the other, Cold Chisel rush at their second album in three years with the reckless exhilaration of greener days. "Alone For You" slams in at full tilt, Don Walker hammering a low left-hand boogie while Jimmy Barnes exercises a newfound clarity in his upper register. "The Backroom" ups the rockabilly like a petrol-head slapping a garage jukebox and "All Hell Broke Lucy" settles into a filthy Stonesy swing as Barnesy growls a sordid tale from the gallows of Berrima Gaol. The attack mellows a little on the title track, one of two songs successfully reshaped from Walker's recent solo albums, but the mood gets thicker on Barnesy's "Long Dark Road", which features guitarist Ian Moss' most arresting solo work.

Laughs? They come later, with the balls-scratching bandidos in "Mexican Wedding" and the slow-grinding sleaze of "The Mansions" – another true story, about the night the cops raided some strip joint in the Cross while the drunks sang Sinatra.

After the surprise disco sidetrack of "Bus Station", it's almost disarming when the single, "Lost", kicks in with the heart-stopping melody of some vintage Chisel single. Hey that's right, they do radio songs too. But mostly, this is one for the road.

MICHAEL DWYER



Clutch

Psychic Warfare

Weathermaker Music/Rocket ★★★★★½

American bruisers keep it heavy and psychological

Clutch approach rock & roll like Rocky Balboa: they eat lightning and crap thunder. Their muscle-bound blues-rock has aged over the course of 11 LPs into a robust, reliable arse-kick-a-thon, with Neil Fallon's voice still possessing enough gruffness to get Bear Grylls in a headlock. From the cowbell punk boogie of "A Quick Death in Texas", the beefy proto-metal riff avalanche of "Behold the Colossus" to the prog-blues punk of "Sucker for the Witch", *Psychic Warfare* hones Clutch's oeuvre to a fine point. Best, though, is the dusty gothic Western of "Our Lady of Electric Light" and "Son of Virginia", where they stretch out like a blues-rock tank driving along a one-lane musical hedgerow.

JAYMZ CLEMENTS



Silversun Pickups

Better Nature ADA/Warner

★★★★½

L.A. band struggle to live up to impressive past on fourth LP

With the references (Smashing Pumpkins, MBV et al) their first two albums received in the rearview, Silversun Pickups' musical identity has now become as opaque as the L.A. River. On *Better Nature* the band continue to evolve towards the nether regions of industrial new wave and spiky glum pop on "Connection" and "Circadian Rhythm (Last Dance)", with guitars taking a backseat to triggered synth riffs. But they still struggle to be concise; for all the high-points – the punchy "Pins and Needles" and the slow burn of album highlight "Friendly Fires" – spiky 'wake up' moments (the back half of "Tapedeck") are weighed down by a lack of brevity and dynamism, leaving the album bereft of needed coherence.

J.C.

Nashville Burns Bright

Alison Mosshart returns to centre stage as supergroup shine again

The Dead Weather

Dodge and Burn Warner ★★★★★



Five years after their last beautifully-deranged outburst, Nashville's freakiest supergroup return with another slice of dark absurdity, once again defying any attempt to decipher which bits of genius came off the cuff and which were carefully calculated. The blueprint hasn't changed too much – Zeppelin and Beefheart coaxed into a cyberpunk orgy of big riffing and brash swagger – but where Jack White stole the show on 2010's *Sea of Cowards*, Alison Mosshart is the jewel in this twisted little crown.

Returned to spotlight-vocal duties, Mosshart sizzles on opener "I Feel Love (Every Million Miles)", all angry magnetism and diffused lust, setting the tone for the rest of the album. "Lose the Right" reprises that vibe brilliantly over an explosive organ riff and stuttering groove, as does

"Rough Detective", which sees White and Mosshart flay each other in a demented duet, the latter walking away winner, but only just.

KEY TRACKS: "I Feel Love (Every Million Miles)", "Mile Markers"



Elsewhere, Mosshart leads the boys in some unexpected directions, offering a little contrast to *Dodge and Burn's* dominate mood. On "Mile Markers" she juxtaposes nasty white-girl rap against poison-bubblegum-harmony to create what could almost pass as pop, and later begs for a Bond Theme with the piano-heavy ballad "Impossible Winner". Start to finish, White drums his arse off, and even channels Les Claypool brilliantly on the vocal of "Three Dollar Hat". But this one is Alison's party.

DAN LANDER



Rob Hirst & Sean Sennett

Crashing the Same Car Twice Footstomp/Sony

★★★★½

Oils drummer drives fast and fiery garage-pop party

Rob Hirst's pummeling propulsion sets an unwavering pace on this short, sweet garage-rock project with Brisbane pop stalwart Sean Sennett. Content wise, the latter's twisted tales of wicked girls running rings around panting boys reach a surreal peak on the darkly alluring "Jane Asher Said". Hirst's sole lead vocal on "White Phosphor Fireworks" carries more sobering allusions to religious warfare. But from the false start and staccato swagger of "When the Darkness Comes" to the trashcan shimmy of "You Don't Know Me", it's the sheer distorted thrill of classic punk-pop ("Call To Arms") that keeps this car crashing.

M.D.



Son Little

Son Little Anti-★★★★½

Debut from genre melting soul singer promises a big future

Son Little – aka Aaron Livingston – is a welcome reminder that there are new frontiers in even the oldest forms, as his debut distils America's deepest musical traditions – blues, gospel, soul – into something new and almost unrecognisable. Livingston's voice is captivating, somehow finding common ground between growling holler and sweet croon, an emotional device as much as a musical instrument. His songs, however, are still hit and miss. For all the charged brilliance of his blues lament "Your Love Will Blow Me Away" and the reggae tinged "Go Blue Blood Red", Livingston is also guilty of misguided moments like the soul schmaltz of "Nice Dreams". Fix that, and this boy will be a serious contender.

D.L.



Simone Felice

From the Violent Banks of the Kaaterskill Warner

★★★★★

Eldest Felice brother delivers career-spanning live recording

Modelled on the 'grand Seventies tradition' of the two-disc live album, 24-track *Violent Banks* was recorded with backing from Simone Felice's former band the Felice Brothers. While the collection might've benefited from the excision of several slow acoustic tracks – Felice's sparse rendition of Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here" is surplus to necessity – tracks co-opting organ, cello, piano and rich BVs to the singer's own heartworn delivery are profoundly, achingly beautiful. Highlights include Felice originals "Bye Bye Palen-ville", "Hey Bobby Ray", and a ragged "New York Times", FB favourite "Don't Wake the Scarecrow", and D&K's "Union Street".

GARETH HIPWELL



Born Ruffians

RUFF Yep Roc/Paper Bag

★★★★½

Flippant indie-pop quartet find value in first-hand experience

Herky jerky Canadian act Born Ruffians have always sounded like they're on the verge of collapsing. But with fourth album, *RUFF*, it's hard to know if they're just keeping it together or finally spiralling off into the ether. After a demo-esque opening run, the album coalesces halfway with the rollicking "When Things Get Pointless I Roll Away", frontman Luke Lalonde yelping, "The world comes together the second I wake". The band have drifted from favour since 2008's *Red, Yellow & Blue*, and when a self-reflexive thread emerges on "We Made It" ("got a deal/sign it real quick/I didn't read it") and self-mythologising kiss-off "(Eat Shit) We Did It", they – ironically – sound inspired and united.

MARCUS TEAGUE



My Own Pet Radio

Goodlum Stop Start

★★★★

Ball Park Music leader branches out, with dark results

After three albums fronting Ball Park Music, Sam Cromack is revisiting his early solo outlet. Shading well outside the lines of his usual squirrely indie pop, the Brisbane hooksmith makes *Goodlum* a clearing house for disparate ideas. "Don't Press Send, Companion" combines psych dreaminess with a rapped mantra and fevered drumming, while luscious sax floats over dusty drum breaks on "Iron Mike". Most interesting, though, is how the brightest tunes contain the darkest lyrics, whether on the sputtering "Never-Ending Wave" or winsome single "No Great Mystery". Amid this hit-and-miss balance of filler and gems lurks a bleaker songwriter itching for more room to air his doubts.

DOUG WALLEN



Bryan Adams

Get Up Polydor

★★★½

Would-be comeback only gets halfway there

The prospect of Jeff Lynne (ELO, Tom Petty) producing Bryan Adams is fairly exciting, and he does lend a bristling, streamlined immediacy to *Get Up*. Adams' heartfelt rasp is in fine form too, but while "You Belong to Me" is a promising country-laced romp and "Don't Even Try" harkens back to late-Fifties innocence, the album's old-school streak also means a lot of bland lip service to rock & roll. Adams still has an easy way with middle-of-the-road anthems, but enthusiasm alone can't salvage stock tunes like "Thunderbolt". Worst of all, four tracks are repeated in acoustic form to fill out the album, making it feel like two EPs stitched together due to a lack of better material.

DOUG WALLEN



Trivium

Silence in the Snow Warner

★★★★

U.S. metallers aim for the stars on seventh studio album

Florida quartet Trivium faced *Silence in the Snow* with the vow of producing a creative milestone that would rival their heavy metal heroes such as Black Sabbath and Metallica. After sharpening their sonic swords with vocal coaches and guitar lessons, the four-piece may not have produced a revolutionary classic – but they had a good crack at it. Opening with the ethereal, orchestral "Snøfall", the tranquility is soon forgotten when you're slammed with the chugging riffs of the title track. Matt Heafy's hint of a growl gives the album an edge, but it's his clean vocals that make for the catchy choruses ("Dead and Gone") that are bound to conjure crowds when this record is played live.

SALLY McMULLEN



Wavves' Growing Pains

Californian slackers' difficult transition to adulthood continues

Wavves *V* POD/Inertia ★★★



What happens when the party's over? When you're newly single and staring down 30? When a one-day bender can ruin you for an entire week? And when you're no longer the precocious kid that became a voice for slacker America 2.0? In the case of Wavves frontman Nathan Williams, you work relentlessly. And then you drink.

Wavves' fifth album is the nightcap of an incredibly busy year. It follows a collaborative LP with Cloud Nothings and new music from Williams' Sweet Valley side project. He found time to release a Courtney Love single on his own imprint, and had a very public – and very ugly – spat with Warner Brothers. When Williams wasn't working, he was drinking excessively with his band, and those experiences (and the ensuing night terrors and paranoia) are literally poured into *V*.

Despite some flashes of optimism, the good-time stoner vibe has been subsumed by something more mature and confronting. "Redlead" is a moment of genuine catharsis on an album that couches real adult shit in zippy pop moments like "Way Too Much" and the Pixies-channelling "Lost". "I'm broken and insane," Williams intones repeatedly, before the track collapses into a feedback-ridden heap. While he never reaches *In Utero* levels of self-immolation, by the end of *V* you're under no illusions that some serious inner-demons have been cleansed.

DARREN LEVIN

KEY TRACKS:

"Way Too Much",
"Heart Attack",
"Redlead"



Lou Doillon

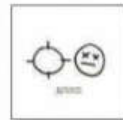
Lay Low Cartel Music

★★★★½

Daughter of Jane Birkin returns with chic second LP

Lou Doillon's follow-up to 2012's *Places* finds her in largely the same territory as that sultry record: elegant, undemonstrative, slightly gothic songs defined by her lovely voice. Part Beth Orton, part Keren Ann, it is a deep, confident groan, so forward in the mix that its breathiness is almost too intimate. One development is the involvement of co-producer Taylor Kirk of Timber Timbre, who brings fuller, shimmering production to some of these sad, bluesy morsels, ensuring the LP's second half departs from the hushed, languid mood that is Doillon's natural style. A mournful collection with touches of mania, this should be played in the dead of night.

BARNABY SMITH



Eden Mulholland

Hunted Haunted Ind.

★★★★

The Mots/Motocade mainstay explodes genre with second LP

A prolific composer for film, TV, theatre and contemporary dance, New Zealander Eden Mulholland is nothing if not versatile. Produced by Victor Van Vugt (Beth Orton), *Hunted Haunted* reprises the delirious eclecticism of *Feed the Beast* (2012). There's feeling enough in Mulholland's roomy vocal, but it's his ear for an infectious chorus hook that elevates the singer above the indie pop main ("The New Old Fashioned"). Reflecting on human limitation, "Thoroughbred" name-drops ballet greats Fonteyn and Nureyev; "Singularity" reminds of Alt-J, showcasing cello and drum programming, while "Long While Yet" is all brooding synths and long-harboured resentment. A strange and wonderful album.

GARETH HIPWELL

DVD

Who Killed Kurt Cobain?

Soaked in Bleach

Stars: Tom Grant
Directed by: Benjamin Statler

Shock
★★★



With rumours of his murder refusing to die, Kurt Cobain is now Generation X's JFK. Although this docudrama doesn't add anything new to the

conspiracy theory, its cogent assembly of the anecdotal, circumstantial and scientific evidence is compelling enough that you'll again be left wondering.

The chief proponent of the Kurt-was-killed argument is Tom Grant, the private investigator Courtney Love hired when her husband went missing in early April, 1994. Smelling a rat, the former cop made audio recordings of his dealings with her and other principals as he fruitlessly searched for Cobain.

These tapes provide the basis for so-so dramatic re-enactments. But the film's at its most convincing when asking how the Nirvana



Soaked in Bleach poses questions about the passing of Kurt Cobain.

frontman injected three times the lethal dose of heroin before supposedly defying anatomic possibility to pull the shotgun trigger. Forgery questions about the note he left are also disturbing. Interviewed for the film, leading police and forensic experts agree the case should be reopened to examine these anomalies and the Seattle police's hurry to declare the death a suicide. As for whodunit, the film doesn't outright accuse Love, though it tries to establish motive by claiming Cobain was set to divorce and disinherit her when he died.

MICHAEL ADAMS



Coheed and Cambria

The Color Before the Sun

300 Entertainment ★★★½

Prog-metallers come back to earth on eighth studio LP

After relying on their signature sci-fi concept for the past 20 years, Coheed and Cambria's latest muse is reality. *The Color Before the Sun* is largely inspired by frontman Claudio Sanchez's growing family, so the songwriting harbours a certain sentimentality. While lyrics such as "you're my everything from here to Mars" ("Here to Mars") teeter on cheesy, they're sung with undeniable sincerity. Plus, the lick of prog-pop-metal guitar riffs in "You Got Spirit, Kid" and Sanchez's unique and earsplitting vocals in "The Audience" pack more than enough punch. Coheed's mutated pop-metal hybrid is enough to give old fans a breath of fresh air without leading them too far astray. **S.M.**



Fanny Lumsden

Small Town Big Shot

Social Family ★★★

Riverina songstress puts Tallimba on the map

Edwina Margaret 'Fanny' Lumsden differentiates herself from Australian country peers with her clear-eyed, unvarnished articulation of life in the bush as it is, rather than as it was. Supported by band the Thrillseekers and producer Matt Fell (Sara Storer), Lumsden surveys hometown Tallimba, NSW – a world in which spongecake symbolises capitulation, kids nick Juicy Fruit from the "tuckshop at the pool" ("Land of Gold"), and "the guy behind the counter at the Shell servo" is a real romantic prospect ("Totem Tennis"). Traversing timeworn country, triumphal folk-pop ("Sea Elephant School") and hymns to self-determination (a la Kacey Musgraves, Lumsden is a breath of fresh country air. **G.H.**



Majical Cloudz

Are You Alone?

Matador/Remote Control

★★★½

Canadian duo hold on to their uniquely haunting sound

Following *Impersonator*, the 2013 album that elevated Majical Cloudz from house party shows to stadium-sized Lorde supports, there was a logical expectation that the Montreal duo could sacrifice their haunting homemade electronic sparsity in favour of more hi-fi recording techniques. Thankfully, although dialling back the abundance of negative space, Devon Welsh's indelicate delivery and ambiguous love-or-death lyrics retain prominence. The arrangements themselves, assisted by Owen Pallett, while distinctly richer, rarely clutter the commanding directness, consistently serving as merely dramatic guides for the theatrical soliloquies. **JONNY NAIL**



Jamie Lawson

Jamie Lawson

Gingerbread Man Records ★★★½

Ed Sheeran protégé overflows album of very modest ambition

This, the first release for Ed Sheeran's Gingerbread Man Records, was produced by Sheeran engineer Will Hicks. Lawson shares some affinity with his label boss, minus Sheeran's electro pretensions. Established hit "Wasn't Expecting That" is a consummate pop entry. But with "Someone for Everyone", Lawson and Hicks can't resist trowelling on brass and drums and nodding bass (though Lawson's catalogue suggest Hicks isn't entirely to blame), while subsequent tracks deploy organ, airy BVs, synth chimes and strings – none of which fortify lyrics like "this heart has its crime rate" ("Still Yours"). It's all a bit bloodless, Lawson's vocal too earnest and polite – see "isn't this grand/swell" ("Ahead of Myself"). **G.H.**



The Dead Daisies

Revolución Spitfire Music

★★★★

Hard rock supergroup deliver polished second album

Featuring former and current members of Mötley Crüe (vocalist John Corabi, who replaced Jon Stevens earlier this year), Guns N' Roses (keyboardist Dizzy Reed and guitarist Richard Fortus) and Thin Lizzy (bassist Marco Mendoza), you know what to expect on this Craig Porteous-produced LP: big, bluesy, polished classic rock with its roots in Seventies Britain and late Eighties L.A. Given the personnel, it's no surprise that each note, hook and drum fill is in exactly the right place – which in some ways is also a negative, given that the likes of "Mexico" and "Something I Said" feel crafted to within an inch of their life. But for lovers of the genre, this is up there with the best hard rock releases of the past decade. **ROD YATES**



Robert DeLong

In the Cards Glassnote Records

★★★

DeLong goes up and everywhere on his second LP

Robert DeLong possesses the kind of scattered eclecticism that seems to be naturally imbued in those brought up in the Internet age. He pinballs between genres and sentiments like a person who grew up on Death Cab For Cutie and Diplo, because he did. Here he hammers together jungle rhythms, boom-clap percussion clatters, syrupy pop vocals and thick streams of house synths into bombastic pop hooks. When it clicks it really clicks, as on “Long Way Down” and the deep house-inflected “Possessed”. But when he tumbles too deeply down a genre-knitting rabbit hole, the results can be impenetrable (“Future’s Right Here”) or plain flat (“That’s What We Call Love”).

JULES LEFEVRE



Hollywood Vampires

Hollywood Vampires

Republic/UMe

★★★★½

Alice Cooper and friends bash out a fun hard-rock covers LP

Alice Cooper has said the debut from Hollywood Vampires – a supergroup led by Cooper, Joe Perry and a flashy guitar upstart named Johnny Depp – is a tribute to his “dead drunk friends” (also the title of a chanter-like original tune here). But it’s mostly made of surprisingly upbeat cover songs, with hard-rocking renditions of “My Generation”, “Break on Through” and “Manic Depression”. Better still, Paul McCartney, Dave Grohl, Joe Walsh and even late *Dracula* star Christopher Lee make guest appearances. What holds it all together is Cooper, who, at 67, still possesses one of the best and grittiest voices in rock and the endless charisma of the undead.

KORY GROW

John Grant's Mid-Life Magic

By turns hilarious and devastatingly cruel crooner hits another winner

John Grant *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure*

Bella Union/PIAS ★★★★★



Critics love John Grant. The Icelandic-based, American-born singer/songwriter is an eminently quotable, charismatic lush who skewers his own brooding persona as much as he does its source: years of scathing self-analysis, anxiety, and tragicomic relationships. While “grey tickles” is the literal translation from Icelandic for “mid-life crisis”, and “black pressure” is the direct translation from Turkish for “nightmare”, his third album might be his most playful yet. Which just means vivid zingers like “I’ve got grey tickles and black pressure/I’d rather lose my arm inside an acorn thresher”, and “I can’t believe I missed New York in the Seventies/I could have gotten a head start in the world of disease”, get tossed on the pile rather than linger. And that’s just the title track.

Here Grant indulges in the electro-bent he forged to great effect on 2013’s fantastic *Pale Green Ghosts*, infusing his oddball character sketches with tremendous sleaze. “You & Him” borrows Amanda Palmer for a poisonous character-takedown (“You and Hitler oughta get together/You oughta learn to knit and wear matching sweaters”), while “Voodoo Doll” has him giving chicken soup to his object of scorn, over a stuttering synth-funk churn (“Even on your worst day/I hate no one less than you”). With a sonorous voice at odds with its owners’ venomous tongue and perversely rendered universe, Grant remains a singular, enigmatic talent.

MARCUS TEAGUE

KEY TRACKS:

“Grey Tickles,”
“Black Pressure,”
“Black Blizzard”



Saintseneca

Such Things Anti-

★★★★

Ohio act return with heavier, more confident sound

Saintseneca’s third record sees them expanded to a five-piece in the wake of 2014’s *Dark Arc*, a refreshing but inoffensive album of raggedy folk-rock. This one is more interesting: along with the big choruses and melodies there is a propulsive thud from the band’s low end that gives these songs a body, a strength, perhaps a foreboding, that was lacking on *Dark Arc*. This grungier feel nicely complements Zac Little’s drawly vocals, particularly on “The Awefull Yawn”. It may take a few listens to grasp *Such Things*, with its often-curiously song structures, diverse instrumentation and cryptic lyrics, but there is reward for patience with a band that have firmly established their own idiosyncratic sound.

BARNABY SMITH



Eagles of Death Metal

Zipper Down Universal

★★★★★

An over-sexed, stonking throwback of the highest order

Rock & roll’s false spring (’01-’06) was a dreamlike time where guitars, tight jeans, aviators and handlebar moustaches ruled. Scant few years in, EDM and beardy rich kids in suspenders put an end to that, yet that leathery utopia lives on in Jesse Hughes’ and Josh Homme’s precocious flair and boogie-heavy, stripper-ready magpie approach to rock. The hipster-baiting of “Silverlake” drips with disdain, and few could get away with a slinky Duran Duran cover (“Save a Prayer”) or the sex-panther jagged rock of “Got the Power”. EODM fit as comfortably as a pair of old leather pants, but considering how diverse *Zipper Down* is, they’re still unzipping parts unknown.

JAYMZ CLEMENTS



Little May's Brooding Debut

Atmospheric indie sisters find kindred spirit on first full-length

Little May

For the Company Dew Process ★★★



The drama was already high and rising with Little May. The pagan bonfire climax of the "Hide" video, the cathartic bush funeral of "Dust"; each propelled from poetic murmur to triumphant crescendo by outsider heroines on proud, majestic chords. The late arrival of producer Aaron Dessner, chief music writer and atmosphere-weaver for Brooklyn guitar-chitects the National, is almost too perfect a development for the Sydney trio's debut long player.

Texturally he's a distraction. Once you recognise him lurking behind the watery arpeggios and slow-building strings of "Cicadas", you more than half expect Matt Berninger to croon in over the solid piano blocks of "Sold", or the bit where the slow ripples of "Seven Hours" open into a cathedral of sensuous exhilaration.

It's to singer Hannah Field's credit, therefore, and that of her co-writers Liz Drummond and Annie Hamilton, that each song manages to wrestle Little May's formative identity from an utterly enveloping aural canvas.



While literal interpretation is hard to divine from the ringing reverb of Dessner's converted church studio in upstate New York, the trio's gift for melancholy melody and images of quiet perseverance beckon secretively through such twilit titles as "Sinks" and "The Sun Is Brighter at Night".

They rock out, too, in the climactic thrash of "Remind Me", and flash back to simpler surroundings in the bonus track, "Hide", flown in from that earlier EP. Mostly though, *Company* is the sound of Little May just holding her own in the tall shadows of a strangely familiar land. **M.D**

KEY TRACK:
"The Sun Is Brighter At Night"



Corb Lund

Things That Can't Be Undone New West ★★★½

Canadian singer-songwriter expands his country palette

It's easy to take Canadian firebrand singer-songwriter Corb Lund as a straight country shooter, especially on the weight of the first two tracks of this album, "Weight of the Gun" and "Run This Town". But for Lund, hard country has always been a departure point rather than a destination, and as *Things That Can't Be Undone* unfolds, his musical alchemy gathers pace. The excellent "Alt Berliner Blues" adds a bluesy shuffle to hints of the Beatles; "Alice Eyes" throws reflections of Billy Bragg's recent work; and while "Washed-Up Rock Star Factory Blues" dives back into country, it's Kris Kristofferson, not Nashville pop. Lund might not reinvent the wheel, but he does find fresh places for it to roll.

DAN LANDER



Philadelphia Grand Jury

Summer of Doom Inertia

★★★

Reformed Sydney trio serve up more punchy, unfussy fuzz-rock

"I hope that this time don't end like last time/I don't think that I could take the disappointment" sings Simon Berckelman on "Bit of a Bummer", possibly referencing PGJ's acrimonious split in 2011. It's one of many fuzzed-out rockers on the follow-up to 2009's *Hope is For Hoppers*, where Berckelman's witty, self-deprecating lyrics shine. The album's songs were recorded live within 30 minutes of being written, and while the results are sometimes a little too bare bones and repetitive, there's still enough earworm hooks to keep the party going ("Crashing & Burning Pt. II", the Seventies AM gold of "Sugar in My Diet").

JAMES JENNINGS



Yacht

I Thought the Future Would Be Cooler Create/Control

★★★★★

Social critique has never sounded more fun

The world isn't a care-free sci-fi utopia, and art collective/synth pop act YACHT ("Young Americans Challenging High Technology") are bummed about it. The solution? Get high and lament society's disconnect over sunny dance jams. It's satire delivered via booty-shaking earworms, making the duo of Jona Bechtolt and Claire L. Evans (the latter a science journalist) something of a Talking Heads for the internet age. The album deals with some heady themes – tech-enabled narcissism ("White Mirror"), experiencing life through the prism of 'content' ("The Entertainment") – but takes care to engage the intellect once it already has your brain's pleasure centre well and truly in its hook-heavy grip. **J.J.**



Motion City Soundtrack

Panic Stations Epitaph

★★★★★

Minneapolis outfit rediscover their mojo on sixth album

Ever since 2005's career-defining *Commit This To Memory* it's been a case of diminishing returns with Motion City Soundtrack – subsequent albums have had flashes of brilliance but been marred by more filler than killer. Against the odds, *Panic Stations* reverses that trend, with the Minneapolis quintet delivering one of the best records of their career. It's not flawless – "Lose Control" is poor-man's Weezer; "Gravity" is MCS by numbers – but when it clicks, as on "Lose Control" and "TKO", it soars. The band save the best until last, with epic finale "Days Will Run Away" building to the kind of stirring climax for which the repeat button was invented. **ROD YATES**



Patty Griffin

Servant Of Love Cooking Vinyl

★★★½

Folk veteran embraces the darkness on 10th LP

Ten records in to an acclaimed career, and Patty Griffin remains unsure. Not about her musical offerings, which on *Servant Of Love* are as polished and collected as ever, but about the Big Questions of happiness and mortality. It's a confusion she revels in and requires, and it's resulted in a record which hums with a grim intent. Wrapped within cool rushes of steel strings, she fears the onslaught of time ("250,000 Miles"), breaks someone's bones on the dark and swirling "Good and Gone", and dips into dimly lit jazz on the title track – her oaky voice curling around a muted trumpet. It's a warm relief when the bright acoustic sunspot of "Made Of the Sun" rolls around. **J.L.**



Autre Ne Veut

Age of Transparency Downtown

★★½

Brooklyn visionary suffers major growing pains

Arthur Ashin's self-produced third album as Autre Ne Veut updates his heartsick R'n'B with bold lashings of jazz. Yet despite his stunning 2014 performance at Laneway, Ashin now straddles a thin line between grating and great. All the impassioned vocals and fluctuating backdrops offer sporadic thrills, but so many stop-start cues and over-the-top emoting prove difficult to wade through. Ashin's gruff ranting on the finale "Get Out" is the album's dodgiest stretch, while "Cold Winds" keeps repeating the lame lyric "I think you're a god". Ambition may be the fire behind *Age of Transparency*, but its best moments, like the lead single "World War Pt. 2", actually reaffirm the value of restraint. **DOUG WALLEN**



Doe Paoro

After Anti-

★★★★½

Strokes of brilliance colour ambitious electronic LP

Doe Paoro's recent single, "The Wind", laid male/female vocal lines and rich strings over a simple keyboard riff and crisp beats. It's an arresting track, expertly produced by Justin Vernon to accentuate the loneliness in Paoro's songwriting. It's also the strongest cut on *After*, Paoro's second LP and first for Anti-. She is an inventive musician, occupying fertile ground between avant-garde R&B and downtempo electronica, and at times her imagination really soars (see the rousing hymn "Growth/Decay" and the dancefloor-ready "Nostalgia"). Some of Paoro's lyrics feel forced, and her lesser tracks lack focus, but *After* nonetheless hints at great things to come. **DAN F. STAPLETON**



Boy & Bear's Evolution

Folk-pop ensemble stay fresh with album number three

Boy & Bear *Limit of Love* Universal ★★★★★



It's been a textbook three-album run for Sydney's Boy & Bear. Recorded with heavy-weight producer Joe Chiccarelli (My Morning Jacket), 2011's folk-stacked *Moonfire* was the archetypal 'runaway' hit debut. With platinum-selling follow-up *Harlequin Dream* (2013), B&B neatly sidestepped second album disappointment, likeably channelling the dreamy cocaine haze of classic Seventies pop and rock.

The band's adjustment to sudden fame and the rigours of heavy touring were minor thematic threads for *Harlequin Dream*, and *Limit of Love* suggests Boy & Bear have yet to fully reconcile themselves to the road ahead – "Showdown" in particular speaks to the disquiet that attends ambition ("I could be on the right track... but maybe I want it too soon"). Produced by Ethan Johns (Laura Marling) – who contributes synths and other novel inclusions – *Limit of Love* was tracked live to tape at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in Wiltshire, and politely nudges the band's sound into new territory.

Opener "Limit of Love" instantly seduces with its winsome South Sea Island groove. Synth throwback and lead single "Walk the Wire" also lands, as do the Beach Boys-styled harmonies of "Hollow Ground", and typically carnivalesque entries "A Thousand Faces" and "Man Alone".

While tracks such as "Where'd You Go" and "Breakdown Slow" threaten to stall proceedings, frontman Dave Hosking's nonchalant vocal more than carries the spell cast by surrounding highlights. **GARETH HIPWELL**

KEY TRACKS:

"Walk the Wire",
"Limit of Love"



U.S. Girls

HalfFree 4AD

★★★★★

Warped pop shot through with dark undercurrents

Like labelmate and fellow pop deconstructionist Ariel Pink, Meg Remy (aka U.S. Girls) has charted a path from lo-fi 4-track experimentalism to something equating a David Lynchian version of pop music. Her 4AD debut is lean – eight tracks and a skit – and the lack of fat pulls her strengths into sharp focus. Genres blend and mutate, the unifying force Remy's dark-hued lyrics: the thumping dub of "Damn That Valley" sung from the perspective of a grieving war widow; the narcotic R&B of "Window Shades" detailing strained relationships; the freak disco of "Woman's Work" a critique of beauty obsession. A compelling step forward for Remy that's both invitation and confrontation. **JAMES JENNINGS**



The Ocean Party

Light Weight Spunk

★★★★★

Wagga-via-Melbourne indie six-piece step up their game

Given the Ocean Party's prolific nature – this being their fifth album in three years – a fast-tracked honing of their craft is somewhat expected. Yet *Light Weight* moves beyond their usual paradoxical aesthetic of light-filled optimism and neatly disguised profundity, instead pitting the two ends as natural opponents. Their first studio visit has the anticipated return of an accentuated pop punchiness. Yet less expected is the sharpness of the lyrical jabs – consistently prominent and bluntly formatted for all matters, including murderous revenge ("Black Blood") or "av-ing a wank" ("Real Life"). A carefully constructed album without the obvious formulaic underpinning. **JONNY NAIL**



Deafheaven

New Bermuda Anti-

★★★★½

Metal upstarts cram third album with unexpected twists

Those hoping that Deafheaven would find a coherent sound will be disappointed by *New Bermuda*. Like its predecessors, this album mashes together ideas with abandon: besides black metal, there are thrash riffs, jangly New Wave guitar tones, field recordings and even nods to the Nineties radio-rock canon. Core members George Clarke (vocals) and Kerry McCoy (guitar) have enlisted three new players, so it's not surprising that some passages sound like they're the work of an entirely new band. It's a thrilling ride, full of show-stopping moments, but it also lacks soul. Until Clarke and McCoy move beyond pastiche and start writing songs that sound uniquely "Deafheaven", their work will fall short of classic status. **D.F.S.**



The Necks

Vertigo Fish of Milk

★★★★½

Be very afraid as cinematic trio embrace Hitchcock's ghost

An ominous fog of metallic hum. A distant nagging of piano. The deeply unsettled 18th outing by the Necks sustains the Hitchcock allusion of its title with 45 minutes of morphing but unabated tension. It's six before the first, reluctant forward motion: Chris Abrahams' piano sneaks downstairs against the ringing trill of a lone string; Tony Buck's percussion a trickling water pipe, Lloyd Swanton's bowed bass a droning threat . . . and so on. As ever, the trio's imperceptible shifts dawn in sudden awareness of different surrounds, awoken by a rattlesnake of percussion, an organ cadence with the fleeting suspicion of jazz or, in the climactic movement, a slow, spooky splintering of gallsows wood. Sweet dreams. **M.D.**



Drunk Mums

Gone Troppo Pissfart

★★★★½

Slacker antics backed up with solid songs

Despite their well-curated ratbag airs, Drunk Mums put a lot of work into their caveman garage rock. They also put in a lot of personality, relishing their exaggerated snideness whether singing about favourite watering holes ("Pub on My Own") or crafting a more ambitious narrative on the jammy opener "Stinny's Brain". This second album may feature songs about nangs and pissing the bed, but the Melbourne brats make sure to include plenty of wiggly melodies amid all the cartoony grotteness. The pace can drag thanks to so many surf-splashed dirges, but Drunk Mums' rascally humour and sheer catchiness usually wins out. If *Gone Troppo* plays at being one big piss-take, secretly it's brimming with heart. **D.W.**



Angie

Free Agent Rice Is Nice

★★★★½

Former Circle Pit lead continues to search for her solo sound

While her debut solo LP, *Turning*, saw Sydney's Angela Bermuda forcibly attach an experimental edge to the bratty attitude of former band Circle Pit, here she draws from her more recent partnership with self-described "freedom rock" enthusiasts Ruined Fortune. The guitar-led compositions are instantly more accessible, yet her vocals remain the barrier – muted by dominant riffs and rarely extended beyond an exhausted tone. While head-nods to the apocalyptic urgency of city-mates Naked on the Vague are welcomed – for nothing else, serving as a reminder of their short-lived vision – Angie's solo output remains regulated as mere companions to her collaborative work rather than as standalone pieces. **J.N.**

Peaches' Raw Honesty

Peaches returns sounding raw, revitalised – and hurt – as ever

Peaches

Rub Kartel Music Group/Rocket ★★★★★



Rub is Peaches' first album in six years, but the brash Canadian has not been idle. Peaches – aka Merrill Nisker – has been attending to other facets of her electroclash empire, including a one-woman production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, touring her electro-rock opera, *Peaches Does Herself*, and performing in an actual opera, *L'Orfeo*, in her adopted hometown of Berlin.

It makes sense then that *Rub* follows such excursions. Recorded in her garage studio, the album sounds like a contained conceptual project working to specific rules. Flipping gender themes and exploratory sex remain benchmarks (or as with the title-track's couplet, "can't talk right now, this chick's dick is in my mouth", the perineum), but her sound receives an update with cold trap house elements. That genre's frosty rising tension

KEY TRACKS:

"Dick in the Air", "Free Drink Ticket"



and release is a natural fit for Peaches' carnal cool, and the first half of the album is sweaty, heavy, and (sex-) club-ready.

That energy crests with "Free Drink Ticket", a brutal diss track. "You were shitting on me/how could I not smell it?" Peaches spits over an icy beat, "I'm in so much pain right now I want you to feel it." Her raw honesty cracks the lewd act, letting the remaining dark dance-pop ("Light In Places", "Dumb Fuck", "I Mean Something") ring with unexpected pathos. Stark naked is so much more than nudity.

MARCUS TEAGUE



New Order

Music Complete Mute

★★★★½

Mancunian legends sound revitalised on 10th LP

A lot of drama has happened since New Order recorded 2005's *Waiting for the Sirens' Call*: original bassist Peter Hook left and the group split, then reformed again in 2011 with original keyboardist Gillian Gilbert. Album 10 sees the band purposefully return to their electronic roots for a muscular, dance-heavy set created squarely with nightclubs in mind. Although Hook's signature bass is missed, there's a tasteful deployment of guests (the Chemical Brothers' Tom Rowlands and La Roux's Elly Jackson) who add flavour to the LP's unrelenting energy. If New Order's M.O. was to prove they're not creatively spent 35 years after forming, then mission accomplished. **J.J.**



Jon Stevens

Woman Social Family Records

★★★

Former Noiseworks vocalist is still in fine voice

Between losing his gig with the Dead Daisies and ending up in the tabloids after splitting with his fiancée, 2015 has been former Noiseworks vocalist Jon Stevens' annus horribilis. His first solo album in four years isn't the angst-laden catharsis it could have been, instead landing somewhere between Foo Fighters-esque pop-rock ("Passing By") and sweeping, bluesy riff-fests ("The Chronic Symphonic"). It works, to a point, largely because of Stevens' formidable vocals, but pub rock moments like "Peaches N Pie" are too throwaway. The string-laden "In Your House", however, complete with hip-hop interlude courtesy of Stevens' son Levi, is a stand-out that suggests he's at his best when taking risks. **ROD YATES**



The Meanies

It's Not Me, It's You Poison City

★★★★

Melbourne punk gods rip like it's 1994

The Meanies had their heyday in the Nineties, sharing stages with Nirvana, Bad Brains and fuelling mosh pits for the first half of the "flannel decade". Since 1994's *10% Weird*, the Melbourne punks have been relatively quiet, at least when it comes to recordings. Which is why it's a pleasant surprise to hear that they're capable of picking up where they left off so effortlessly. The melodic hardcore and buzzsaw tomfoolery kicks in from the first bar of opener "You Know the Drill" and carries through to closer "Punchin' Air". When music's this simple, it needs to be energetic and believable, and the Meanies nail it better than anyone has since the Ramones. **MATT COYTE**



An Eagle Comes Home to Roost

Don Henley reconnects with his Texas roots on an LP full of guest stars and sharp storytelling

Don Henley

Cass County Capitol

★★★★



Don Henley was country before it was cool, long before he was a singing, drumming and songwriting member of the Eagles. *Cass County*, his first solo album in 15 years, is named after the East Texas plains where Henley, now 68, grew up amid farming, oil rigs and the Southern radio crossfire of blues, gospel and honky-tonk music that produced rock & roll. Henley alludes to those roots and ideals in his true grit here – 11 original songs of working-stiff portraiture, broken-love autopsy and sunset-years judgment – along with a handful of rich-soil covers. They include the Louvin Brothers' 1955 hit "When I Stop Dreaming", Jesse Winchester's rustic 1970 jewel "The Brand New Tennessee Waltz", and the psychedelic-prairie waltz "She Sang Hymns Out of Tune", originally a 1966 single by Jesse Lee Kincaid.

A whole record of that rewind would have been an instructive pleasure. Instead, Henley has made an album of quietly defiant pure-country modernism. Written and produced with Stan Lynch, the original drummer in Tom Petty's Heartbreakers, *Cass County* is meticulously crafted, sharply written and absolutely free of neo-country additives like reheated Seventies-rock bombast and Twitter-verse vernacular. The single mother slinging hash in "Waiting Tables", the farmer staring at the sky in "Praying for

Rain" and the overdue divorce at the centre of "Take a Picture of This" are all framed by a rich, vintage minimum of strumming, steel-guitar tears and straightforward harmonies. "It's the oldest form of suicide," Henley warns in the saloon blues "Too Much Pride", the kind of morality lesson you'd expect on an Eagles LP – except Henley cuts it more like the seasoned hardass romanticism of Merle Haggard.

Haggard actually shows up on this album, taking a verse in "The Cost of Living" with brawny authority. But everything in the music serves the sting and solace in the tales. That goes for Henley's parade of celebrity guests too. Many – like Alison Krauss, Trisha Yearwood and Lucinda Williams – serve in the backing chorales. Those who get a shot up front keep it short and poised. When Mick Jagger, a rare outright rocker here, takes a verse after Miranda Lambert in the cover of Tift Merritt's "Bramble Rose", it is with a striking restraint miles from his hayseed exaggeration in the Rolling Stones' "Far Away Eyes".

It's worth remembering that the Eagles were really a singer-songwriters' band with country flair. Thus the real stars on *Cass County* are Henley's finely etched walking wounded in songs like "That Old Flame" and "Words Can Break Your Heart", and his aged-like-whiskey tenor, which confronts and comforts with equal measure. Henley evokes his own wild days, after he left Texas, in the hard twang and speed of "Where I Am Now": "I've done some foolish things/And I've been downright stupid." But, he contends, "I made it through somehow/And I like where I am now." Which, on this album, is home. **DAVID FRICKE**

KEY TRACKS:

"The Cost of Living", "That Old Flame"

Art's New Frontiers

Sydney festival favourites make long-awaited return

Art vs Science

Off the Edge Of the Earth and Into Forever, Forever Magellanic/MGM ★★☆☆½



You could be forgiven for going into Art vs Science's new album with a little trepidation. This is, after all, the same band who once wrote songs about magic fountains and girls taking their tops off, both of which have aged about as well as you'd expect.

But it's been a solid five years since those days and the Sydney three-piece have grown up. *Off the Edge Of the Earth and Into Forever, Forever* is their second album and, thankfully, it's a return that's seen AvS shake off the schtick that used to define them.

Instead, they've written proper rock songs with an electronic edge, and lots of them. "Unity" is a throwback electro banger that could have come from the hands of

KEY TRACKS:
"Diana", "Bongo Plan", "Stars Pt. 1"



Justice, two-part track "Stars" is a hazy 10-minute trip and "Diana", the album's perfect home run, makes a yearning love song out of Seventies-inspired psychedelia. Hell, even the song about bongo drums works. It's only the lead single "In This Together", which sounds too messy and too much like the old stuff, that summons something close to a cringe. It'd be a pity if that put people off, because *Off the Edge Of the Earth and Into Forever, Forever* is a comeback that proves just how good AvS can be.

KATIE CUNNINGHAM



Julia Holter

Have You In My Wilderness
Domino ★★★★★½

Fourth album of twisted greatness from L.A. artist

Julia Holter makes avant-garde music for people who didn't know they liked avant-garde music. She creates connections between experimental and pop realms like few others – and *Have You In My Wilderness* is her most sublime moment yet. In contrast to the conceptual *Loud City Song* (2013), Holter has framed this record around a series of romantic vignettes; her voice floating high above arrangements that waver from Sixties baroque pop ("Sea Calls Me Home", "Feel You") to formless jazz ("Vasquez"). The vaudevillian shuffle of "Everytime Boots" proves she can be playful as well as sombre. And then there's "Lucette Stranded On the Island", which is so airy it might just float away, and take you with it.

DARREN LEVIN



Dylan Joel

Authentic Lemonade Warner
★★★★★

Melbourne MC maintains the love on debut full-length

A few years ago Dylan Joel was being unearthed by Triple J, and he's spent the intervening time squeezing lemons, dropping records and shaping a gospel and swing-infused sound that's neither too sweet or sour. With pinpoint production from Cam Bluff, *Authentic Lemonade* has got singles for days, from the incisive "Numbers", which runs a loupe over the music industry, to upbeat closer "What's Good". Guest spots from Mantra and DJ Izm on "Swing" only add to the sense of familial collaboration that runs through the track list. It's the outstanding choral centerpiece "Hope Is", though, that forms the heart of the record and elevates the set into something really special.

DAN FINDLAY



Deerhunter

Fading Frontier 4AD
★★★★★

U.S. indie rock darlings top their last effort, once again

Deerhunter are very much a band of two halves. On one hand you have the deftly crafted indie-rock guitar opuses of guitarist Lockett Pundt, which are generally thick with hooks and sonic emotion, but fairly ho-hum lyrically. On the flipside you have songs by singer Bradford Cox. Cox is the provocateur, his work bounces between genres. He lacks the consistency of Pundt but kicks the ball out of the park more frequently. On this, their seventh LP, both sides of Deerhunter vie for supremacy, resulting in their strongest album to date. The only weak track on this surprisingly focused album also happens to be the lead single, "Snakeskin". Let's hope it doesn't put anyone off.

M.C.



Battles

La Di Da Di Inertia
★★★★½

Futuristic rockers find their groove on third album proper

While Battles' debut LP *Mirrors* was a revelation, a frenzy of experimentation and breakneck grooves, their follow-up, *Gloss Drop*, was less impressive, relying on chaotic cut-and-paste, sacrificing the rhythmic cohesiveness of their debut to make room for a slew of guest vocalists. Now Battles' foundations have settled somewhat and they sound like a band where everyone has found their place. Drummer John Stanier is the glue that holds together Ian Williams and Dave Konopka's guitar/synth/loop spasticity, and without vocals and too much else to compete with, *La Di Da Di* all sounds like just enough, rather than far too much. Welcome back to the future, Battles.

M.C.



Mathas

Armwrestling Atlas Big Village
★★★★★

Challenging and essential hip-hop from Perth maestro

Mathas didn't just pen the fierce, thoughtful lyrics on *Armwrestling Atlas*, he also produced beats and painted the album artwork. Several joints, among them "Nourishment" feat. Abbe May, will be familiar, having dropped over the lengthy gestation, but their impact is intact and now they sit in context, part of the moody soundscape and other scathing looks at modern culture. "Free Shit" feat. Ylem & Mei Saraswati rips into the relationship between brands and consumers while "Stone Cold Sober" feat. Empty is an open-hearted look at death and our connection to the planet. Esoteric and densely lyrical, *Armwrestling Atlas* is an impressive achievement.

D.F.



The Garden

Haha Epitaph/Burger

★★★★½

U.S. twins specialise in erratic party anthems

Despite encouraging an unholy union between punk label Epitaph and DIY garage imprint Burger, the Garden aren't confined to merely garage or punk. Instead, California twins Wyatt and Fletcher Shears range wildly across rapping, cursing, cheap electronics and breakbeats over these 17 songs, all maddeningly catchy but often quite fleeting. "I Guess We'll Never Know" evokes Shabazz Palaces, but "Egg" is a dead ringer for Hot Hot Heat and "This Could Build Us a Home" plays like buzzy New Wave via the Drums. Some of it borders on novelty ("We Be Grindin'") but the Garden's channel-surfing variability still yields a high-anxiety party album that leaves genre boundaries in the dust.

DOUG WALLEN



Dan Kelly

Leisure Panic! ABC

★★★★★

Lovable smart-arse streamlines and mellows out

It's been five years between albums for Dan Kelly, but that's only given this wry chronicler more time to amass pop-culture references. *Leisure Panic!* finds our hero "hidin' out from Google Maps and drones in the sky" before making stops at falsetto soft-rock ("Haters"), cheeky Australiana ("Baby Bonus") and the frayed late-Pavement pop of "Never Stop the Rot". It's less wordy than 2010's ambitious *Dan Kelly's Dream*, but behind those drowsy lyrics and AM-radio hooks lurk as many anxieties as ever. "Gold Coast Man" plays like a version of the Kinks' "Apeman" for our times, while "Ex Bandido" sees him dropped in the Coral Sea wearing concrete boots. Welcome back, then.

D.W.



The Gospel of Josh Ritter

Singer-songwriter and novelist brings the brimstone on eighth album

Josh Ritter *Sermon on the Rocks* Warner ★★★★★



Josh Ritter's previous album, *The Beast in its Tracks* (2013), was an anomaly in his career to date. Acutely personal, it was essentially a divorce album, albeit one of compassion and devoid of self-pity. That out of his system,

Sermon on the Rocks is an immersion back into what had defined him as one of his generation's most poetic folk-inflected artists: history, religion and the working man.

These 12 tracks (24 if you count a fascinating bonus disc of demos) are awash with biblical imagery and mythological Americana. Ritter's vivid, surreal storytelling, with its strange characters, is most effective when delivered with his familiar fast, rhythmic speak-singing, most notably on "Lighthouse Fire". This stream-of-consciousness style approaches Tom Waits territory (that album title is decidedly Waits-y too), though Ritter is perkier – the tracks behind the wordy expositions of "Getting Ready To Get Down" and "Young Moses" smilingly bounce along.

With its emphasis on complex narratives more than harmonic finesse, this isn't as pretty as albums like *The Animal Years* (2006) and *The Historical Conquests Of* (2007). Ritter the melodic balladeer does emerge, however, on the excellent closer "My Man On A Horse Is Here", a softer denouement to a fantastically rich, weird record from one who, after that cathartic experiment with the confessional, is firmly back in his most comfortable saddle.

BARNABY SMITH

KEY TRACKS:

"Getting Ready To Get Down", "Young Moses"



Hurts

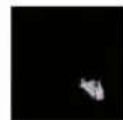
Surrender Columbia

★★★★½

British duo provide a masterclass in melodrama

Broody, angular and self-conscious, Hurts are truly committed to resurrecting the art of pompous pop. While their debut, 2010's *Happiness*, was a stylish homage to new wave synth, its follow-up, *Exile*, ventured into darker territory. *Surrender* veers from pop to rave to rock, and lacks the tight conceptual direction of their earlier records, but there's a sense of theatricality that underpins the entire album. "Rolling Stone" ramps up the drama, replete with lyrics like "In Belarus she was a vespertine, she danced the go-go for the bourgeoisie". The title track features a flourish of female vocals, while the over-the-top arrangement of "Wish" is as equally ridiculous as it is brilliant.

MICHAEL WILTON



Bob Moses

Days Gone By Domino

★★★★★

A pair of NYC electro kids, not a grizzled old folk singer

This duo's exploration of dance music as a dark, intimate and emotional expression has yielded two so-so EPs, but this debut LP is a startling step up, a fascinating record characterised by its subtle, minimalist production. The percussive, primitive electronica recalls the Juan MacLean, while the fact these tracks are clearly the result of considered, structured songwriting efforts ensures Bob Moses' digital sonic landscape is far from merely atmospheric. Their most satisfying melodic moments, such as "Like It Or Not", have flavours of latter-day Pet Shop Boys. At nearly an hour, *Days* is a trifle long and loses focus occasionally, yet there is a sumptuous sensibility at work here.

B.S.



Alex G

Beach Music Domino

★★★

Prolific underground strummer inches towards stardom

It's quite unfortunate that bedroom songwriter Alex Giannascoli chose to rein in his eccentricities when recording his seventh full-length (and first for esteemed indie label Domino). In the past, his music's quirkier elements – which ranged from squally guitar bursts to bits of lo-fi electronica – helped set him apart from the countless other Elliott Smith-alikes who have flooded the internet with home-made recordings in the past decade. But now, with a broader audience waiting, Giannascoli has produced something tidier and more consistent. With its hazy vibe and washes of acoustic guitar, *Beach Music* is undeniably pleasant – and also quite forgettable.

DAN F. STAPLETON



Kurt Vile

b'lieve i'm goin down

Matador/Remote Control ★★★★★

Philadelphia cult hero gets under your skin

Kurt Vile's sixth album is a very different beast to 2013's *Wakin' On a Pretty Daze*; and that difference is as stark as night and day. Literally. *b'lieve* was recorded during booze-soaked late night sessions, and that nocturnal atmosphere is so thick you can taste the beer and tequila that facilitated it. Most things happen at a natural pace. Banjo and fingerpicked acoustic are the perfect platform for Vile's laconic drawl. The frank (and funny) character study "Pretty Pimpin'" is more upbeat, while the kraut-folk of "Lost My Head There" goes nowhere and everywhere simultaneously. This won't see him crossover like Philly buddies the War On Drugs. For Vile, slow and steady wins the race.

DARREN LEVIN



Darlene Love

Introducing Darlene Love

Wicked Cool/Columbia

★★★★½

Girl-group royal takes back her throne with help from E Streets

Yep, there's irony in the title of this showcase for pop vet Darlene Love. It sounds like what you'd expect from producer Steve Van Zandt: like the E Street Band updating Phil Spector's Wall of Sound. Seventy-four-year-old Love comes at it like a wrecking ball, husky alto thrillingly intact, channelling girl-group passion through a woman's scars on vintage material and two Brill Building ringers by Bruce Springsteen. The unlikely highlights: a duet with Righteous Brother Bill Medley on Elvis Costello's "Still Too Soon to Know", and "Jesus Is the Rock (That Keeps Me Rollin')", a gospel shouter by Van Zandt, who clearly heard God in this voice.

WILL HERMES



Slayer

Repentless Nuclear Blast

★★★

Thrash-metal godfathers are still raging after all these years

Decades after Metallica and Megadeth started writing radio-friendly songs, thrash-metal firebrands Slayer are still courting controversy – depicting Jesus in hell on their new LP cover and howling, "A little violence is the ultimate drug/Let's get high!" on standout "Vices". Chilean-American frontman Tom Araya even teases a race war on "Pride in Prejudice". It's Slayer's first record without late guitarist-songwriter Jeff Hanneman, who died of alcohol-related cirrhosis in 2013 – but it's their most vital, bloodthirsty offering since 2001's *God Hates Us All*, with furious guitar solos from Kerry King and Gary Holt. Slayer may never change. With an album like this, why should they?

KORY GROW

Richards' Solo Gold

Folk, reggae and tons of guitar brilliance on his first LP in 23 years

Keith Richards *Crosseyed Heart*

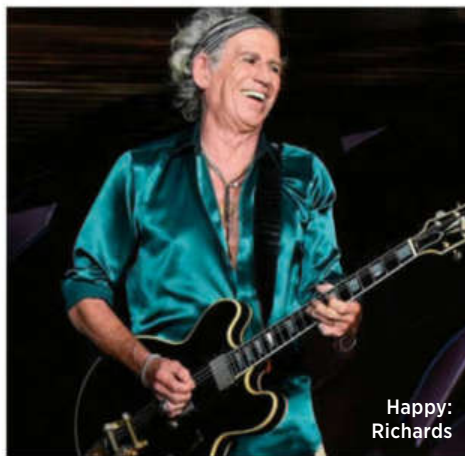
Republic ★★★★★



Keith Richards' first solo album since 1992 opens like a fever dream, with the 71-year-old rock god croaking acoustic blues like Robert Johnson after burning down a half-ounce spliff. But it's a feint. "All right, that's all I got," he snaps just under two minutes in, before upshifting into his most eccentric and best-ever solo set. *Crosseyed Heart* is the sound of Richards following his pleasure wherever it leads, with a lean, simpatico team including longtime session pals Steve Jordan, Ivan Neville and Waddy Wachtel backing him up all the way.

Naturally, there's a dip into roots reggae: Gregory Isaacs' 1974 lovers' rock signature, "Love Overdue", complete with brass and Neville's sweet backing vocals. There's also a straight read of "Goodnight Irene", a folk

KEY TRACKS:
"Robbed Blind",
"Trouble"



Happy: Richards

standard that Richards likely heard as a kid when the Weavers' version charted in 1950. Two originals are as strong as any Stones songs of recent decades: "Robbed Blind", a "Dead Flowers"-scented outlaw-country ballad that echoes Merle Haggard's "Sing Me Back Home", and "Trouble", all hiccup-riff swagger with a slide-guitar mash note from Wachtel to ex-Stone Mick Taylor. There's a charmingly cheeky duet with Norah Jones ("Illusion"), and some beautifully telling moments (see "Amnesia") where Keith's guitar is nearly everything – his sublime grooves sprouting melodic blooms and thorny leads. It's proof that, at his core, the dude's an army of one.

WILL HERMES



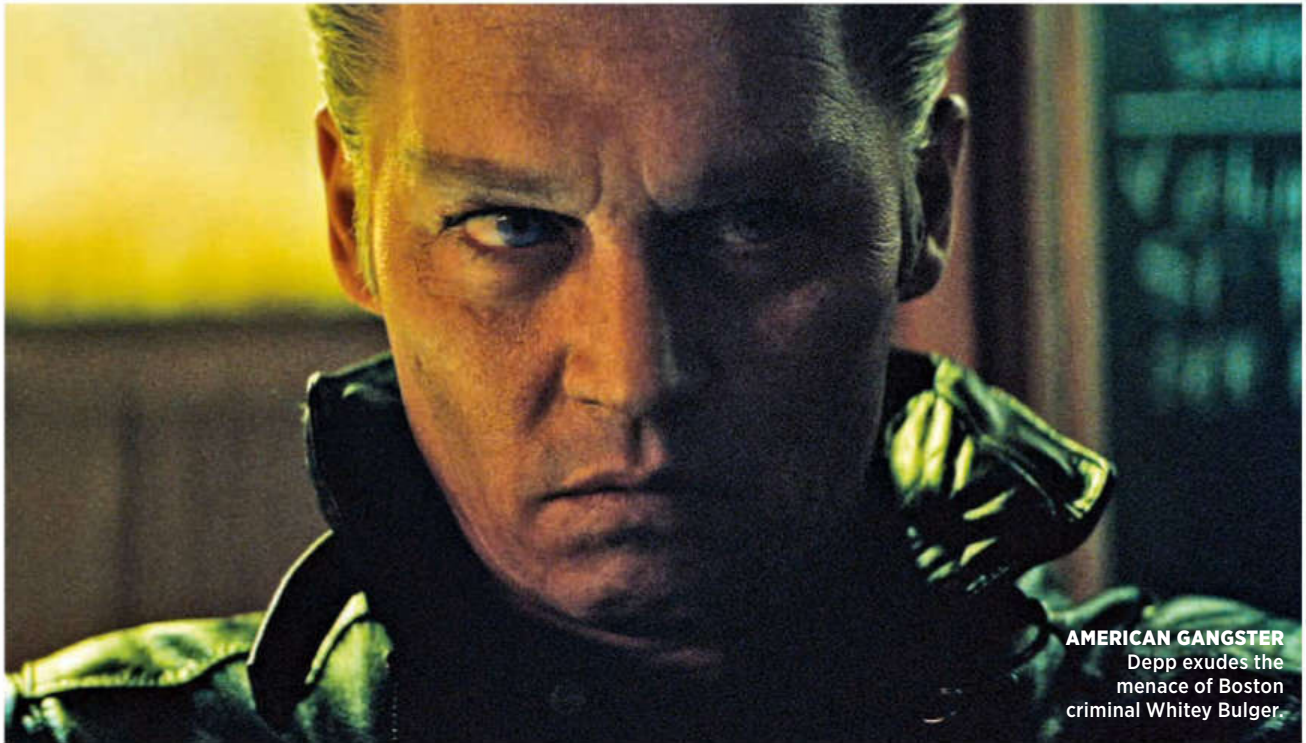
Nothing But Thieves

Nothing But Thieves Sony

★★

Modern rock melodrama pleads guilty to eating itself

Their name might be interpreted as fair warning, but it's difficult not to press charges against this latest gang of UK indie pretenders. Muse fans will either be delighted or enraged by the Essex lads' bombastic guitar-orchestral sculptures and singer Conor Mason's positively slappable histrionics. "Excuse Me" and "Itch" amply illustrate the dominant formula of anxious falsetto wailing and lumbering guitar counterpoint. The mellow sob of "If I Get High" offers respite from the latter but alas, Mason's tremulous warble climbs onward to the very stars outside Thom Yorke's bedroom window. With the mewling Jeff Buckley pastiche "Lover, Please Stay", the prosecution rests. MICHAEL DWYER



AMERICAN GANGSTER
Depp exudes the menace of Boston criminal Whitey Bulger.

The Prince of Darkness

Johnny Depp really lets it rip as the FBI's most wanted killer By Peter Travers

Black Mass

Johnny Depp, Joel Edgerton, Benedict Cumberbatch

Directed by Scott Cooper

★★★★½

ICE-COLD. DEAD EYES. DEMONIC laugh. His face a mask you can't read until he's up in yours. That's Johnny Depp giving everything he's got in a riveting, rattlesnake performance as South Boston gangster James "Whitey" Bulger in *Black Mass*. The FBI finally grabbed this Osama bin Laden of gangsters in 2011. The Irish mobster had been hiding in plain sight since 1994. Now 86, Bulger moulders in prison, found guilty of 11 of the 19 murders with which he'd been charged.

Jack Nicholson did a fictional take on Bulger in 2006's Oscar-winning *The Departed* (while a fugitive, Bulger reportedly sneaked in to see the film). *Black Mass*, smartly directed by Scott Cooper (*Crazy Heart*), casts a wide if hardly deep net, since the tentacles of Bulger's tale could fill a miniseries or five. The script, by Mark Mal-

louk and Jez Butterworth, is based on the 2000 book *Black Mass: The True Story of an Unholy Alliance Between the FBI and the Irish Mob*, by Dick Lehr and Gerard O'Neill. And an unholy alliance it truly was.

Bulger had known FBI agent John Connolly (Joel Edgerton) from the Boston hood. It's Connolly who persuades his fellow Southie to turn FBI informant in return for help in crushing

the Italian Mob. Bulger got the best of that deal, leaving the FBI boss (Kevin Bacon) fuming. Edgerton excels at detailing the dread eating at Connolly; the dread also infects his ethical wife, Marianne (a superb Julianne Nicholson), whose quiet scene with Depp instills more terror than a hail of bullets.

But you get the bullets, too, and the gore, especially when

Bulger lieutenant Stephen Flemmi, expertly slimed by Rory Cochrane, is on the scene. And duck when Bulger turns his gun on informant Brian Halloran, played with bug-fuck lunacy by Peter Sarsgaard.

Is there any sympathy for the devil that is Whitey? The death of his only son, at age six, clearly rocks him, as it does the boy's mother (a touching Dakota Johnson). But the key path into Bulger is his good brother, William "Billy" Bulger, former Massachusetts Senate president. Billy remains shrouded in mystery. Luckily, Brit acting icon Benedict Cumberbatch doesn't need dialogue to make his character understood. Cumberbatch reveals Billy's loyalty in the space between words. Frustrating? At times, yes. But you forgive the zigs, zags, evasions and subplots for the hardcore power of Depp's performance and the film's portrait of moral rot on both sides of the law. If there's such a thing as a wild ride into the heart of darkness, this is it.

Need Help? Hire De Niro

The Intern

Robert De Niro, Anne Hathaway

Directed by Nancy Meyers

★★★

It's not much of a movie. But raging bull Robert De Niro, suited up to play for humour and heart, proves he can be a world-class charmer. He plays Ben Whittaker, 70, a retired widower hired as an intern for a Brooklyn e-commerce fashion house run by Jules Ostin (Anne Hathaway), a workaholic wife and mother who doesn't



De Niro, Hathaway

know what a geezer can teach her until, well, she does. That's it – pure fantasy piffle from writer-director Nancy Meyers. De Niro makes it go down easy.

The Great Disappearing Act

New HBO mystery ups the creepy factor

By Michael Adams

The Leftovers

Justin Theroux, Amy Brenneman

Created by Damon Lindelof, Tom Perrotta

★★★★



It's been three years since 140 million people simply vanished in what's become known as the Sudden Departure, and life goes on in the mid-American town of Mapleton –

kinda. That's the premise of *The Leftovers*, HBO's haunting 10-part series based on the novel of the same name by Tom Perrotta, whose books *Election* and *Little Children* also made for biting screen adaptations.

Eschewing apocalyptic tropes as sure-ly as it does any explanation for the Sudden Departure, *The Leftovers* zeroes in on how Mapleton's interconnected characters cope with a world forever changed by what may or may not have been the Christian rapture. Chief of police Kevin (Justin



GONE GIRLS

The Leftovers is "stubbornly weird, beautifully written".

Theroux) tries to keep the peace and rebuild his life after his wife Laurie left him to join the Guilty Remnant, a spooky cult that stalks people to ensure no-one forgets God's judgement is near. Nora Durst grieves the disappearance of her husband and two kids, while her deranged preacher brother Matt sets out to expose the sins of the disappeared, thus "proving" they

couldn't have been taken by a God who left him behind.

Stubbornly weird, beautifully written, acted and produced, *The Leftovers* is moody, mysterious TV that gets under your skin. Season 2 promises to be a reboot, extending on Perrotta's premise and seeing some characters head for a town where no-one vanished.



We Are Still Here

Barbara Crampton

Directed by Ted Geoghegan

★★★

Like an escapee from a 1980s VHS box, this indie horror is effective despite its numerous deficiencies. Writer-director Ted Geoghegan's flick has a middle-aged couple retreating to an isolated house to grieve the death of their son. But things go bump in the night, the old pile has a dark history and the creepy townsfolk know more than they're letting on. While these tropes creak as loudly as the cellar stairs and the writing and performances are patchy, sombre visuals and a straight-faced approach build an unnerving atmosphere, with some satisfying shocks in the final act.



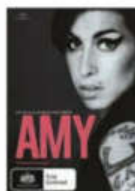
Love & Mercy

John Cusack, Paul Dano

Directed by Bill Pohlad

★★★½

Tender isn't a word we use much in modern cinema, but it fits this loving depiction of Brian Wilson, mad genius behind the Beach Boys. In 1960s-set sequences, Paul Dano plays the young songwriter, hitting creative heights as his mind unwinds. In the Eighties, John Cusack is Wilson as broken man under the control of quack Dr Gene Landy (Paul Giamatti) until rescued by the love of Melinda Ledbetter (Elizabeth Banks). *Love & Mercy* probably hits the "holy fool" image of Wilson too hard but the performances are stirring and the depictions of his musical process are spine-tingling.



Amy

Amy Winehouse

Directed by Asif Kapadia

★★★½

Senna director Asif Kapadia's portrait of Amy Winehouse comprises home video, promo interview and paparazzi footage, with audio grabs from those who knew her best and/or exploited her the worst. We witness Winehouse's sudden rise with *Frank* and her almost immediate spiral into self destruction as she falls for Blake Fielder, augments her diet of booze and speed with crack and smack, follows up with the wildly popular *Back In Black* and descends into a private hell as she becomes public property. It's grimly compelling and ineffably sad, though there's not a lot of insight into her psyche.



Jurassic World

Chris Pratt

Directed by Colin Trevorrow

★★★½

Jurassic Park's digital dinosaurs were great, not just because they revolutionised CGI but because Steven Spielberg used them sparingly to awe, charm and shock. But *Jurassic World* is the Transformersaurus of the franchise, with Colin Trevorrow hurling everything at us. The slender story has dino whisperer Chris Pratt and business brain Bryce Dallas Howard trying to save themselves and pesky kids from genetically altered beasts rampaging around revamped Jurassic World. The sensation and synthetic spectacle are poor substitutes for the original's suspense and sophisticated scares.

Neil Fallon, Clutch

The frontman of the U.S. rockers on free goat's cheese and psychic Santas

By Matt Coyte

The last time I said this is the last time

It probably involved a bottle of gin. It was probably last Friday when I said this is the last time I'm gonna have a bottle of gin. We'll see if that holds true.

The last lie I told

I lie frequently to my son. He did ask me if Santa Claus could read his mind and I said, "Yes, he could." I guess that's psychic warfare on a five year old.

The last time I questioned my career choice

Probably around 1999, where I realised that close to 10 years had gone by and we were reaching the point of no return, and then I finally realised that I didn't have any marketable skills and that playing rock & roll was a lot of fun. That was really the last time that I questioned my career and it's been a lot easier ever since.

The last time I was embarrassed

Ha, what time is it? One time I walked onstage with about three feet of toilet paper stuck to the bottom of my shoe. There's really no cool or suave way to back out of that, you really have to embrace it. It's good to have a little humble pie in front of several thousand people every once in a while.

The last time I tried to get something for free

I've only once written to a company to try and get product for free. We have a song called "Cyprus Grove" on *Blast Tyrant* and there's a creamery out in California called Cyprus Grove, and I'm very fond of their goat's cheese. So I wrote them a letter and I sent them an mp3 of the song, hoping I could get a case of goat's cheese. God knows what I would have done with it. They sent me a note saying they really liked the song and they appreciated my support of their product, but alas, they sent me no cheese.

The last time I felt in danger

Any time I get on the Washington D.C. Beltway I feel like I'm in danger. The motto for people driving in D.C. is, "Fuck you, me first."

The last day job I had

Would have been in 1999, I was a car courier. I started as a bicycle courier, but I was terrible at it, so I basically got fired and moved into a three cylinder car and delivered packages to people in Denver. It was a terrible gig.



“I walked onstage with three feet of toilet paper stuck to the bottom of my shoe.”

It's good to have those sorts of jobs as a reminder to say, "You've got it pretty good so don't look the gift horse in the mouth."

The last time I ate something I regretted

That would have been just the other night when I was coming back from Los Angeles and I was starving and the only option was a hot dog. I usually shy away from those things. That still haunts me, it's been about three days of a continued state of lethargy.

The last rumour I heard about myself

I try to avoid hearing that sort of stuff, I never read the comments section. I've heard that I'm a Freemason. I guess the Freemasons have got pretty cool lookin' rings. I could do with one of those,

but I don't think I could deal with all the ritual and ceremony and bow ties. They do have cool props. They're a prog metal band without the music.

The last time I was star struck

Last weekend I met Lee Ving from Fear when I was in L.A. doing the Teenage Time Killers show. I bumped into him in a hallway and introduced myself and he was very cordial. His records were part of my high school soundtrack, and I think usually the times when I'm really dumbstruck is when I meet people that inspired me when I was at that really impressionable age. He's 65 and he finished his set by giving everyone the finger. I hope I have a bit of that vitriol at that age.

The last time I threw a tantrum

I'm gonna end up talking about the Washington Beltway again! My son has learned all of his curse words while we've been driving on the Beltway!

OUT NOW



Psychic Warfare
Clutch release their eleventh studio album, *Psychic Warfare* – featuring lead single “X-Ray Visions” – this month.

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